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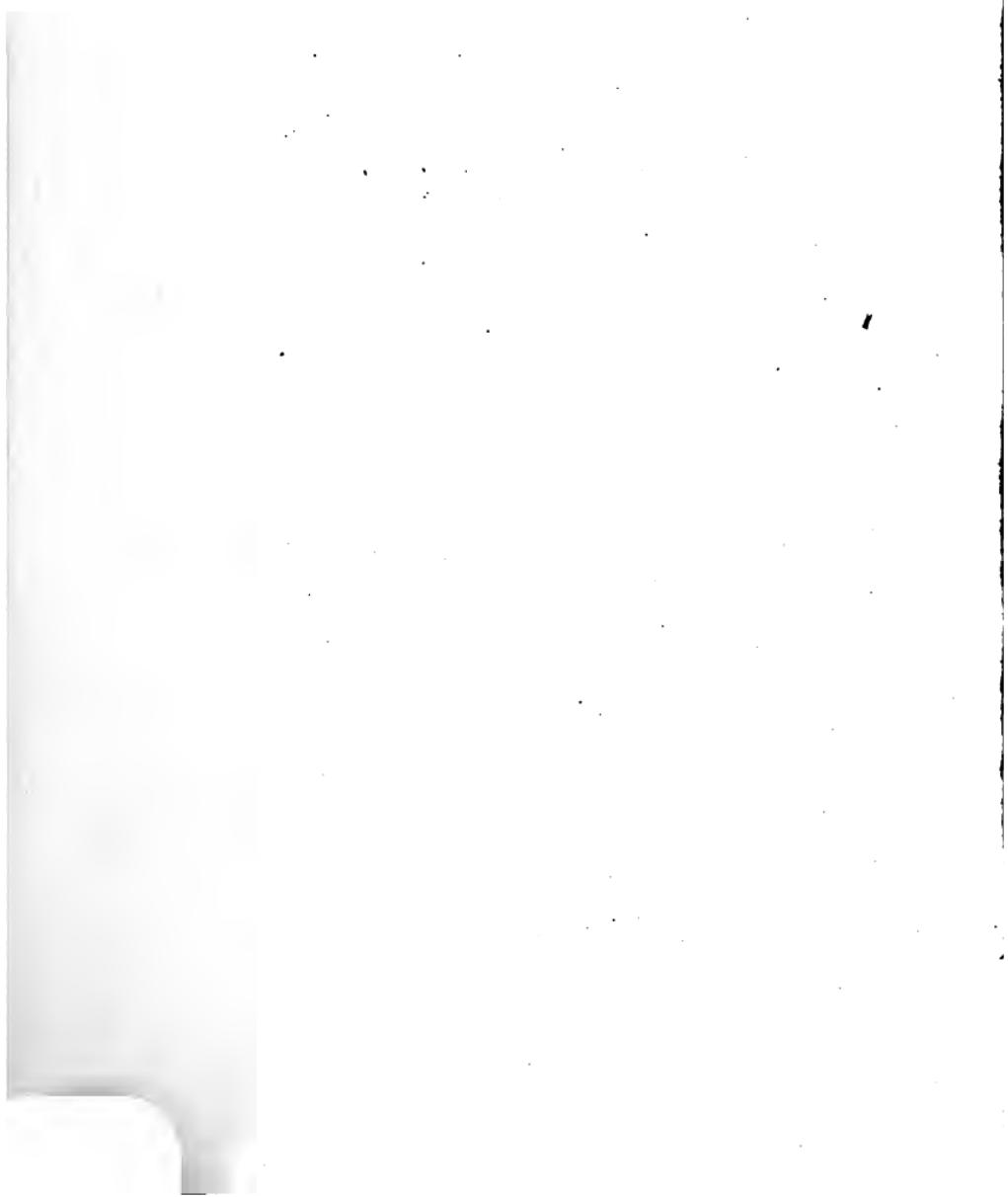


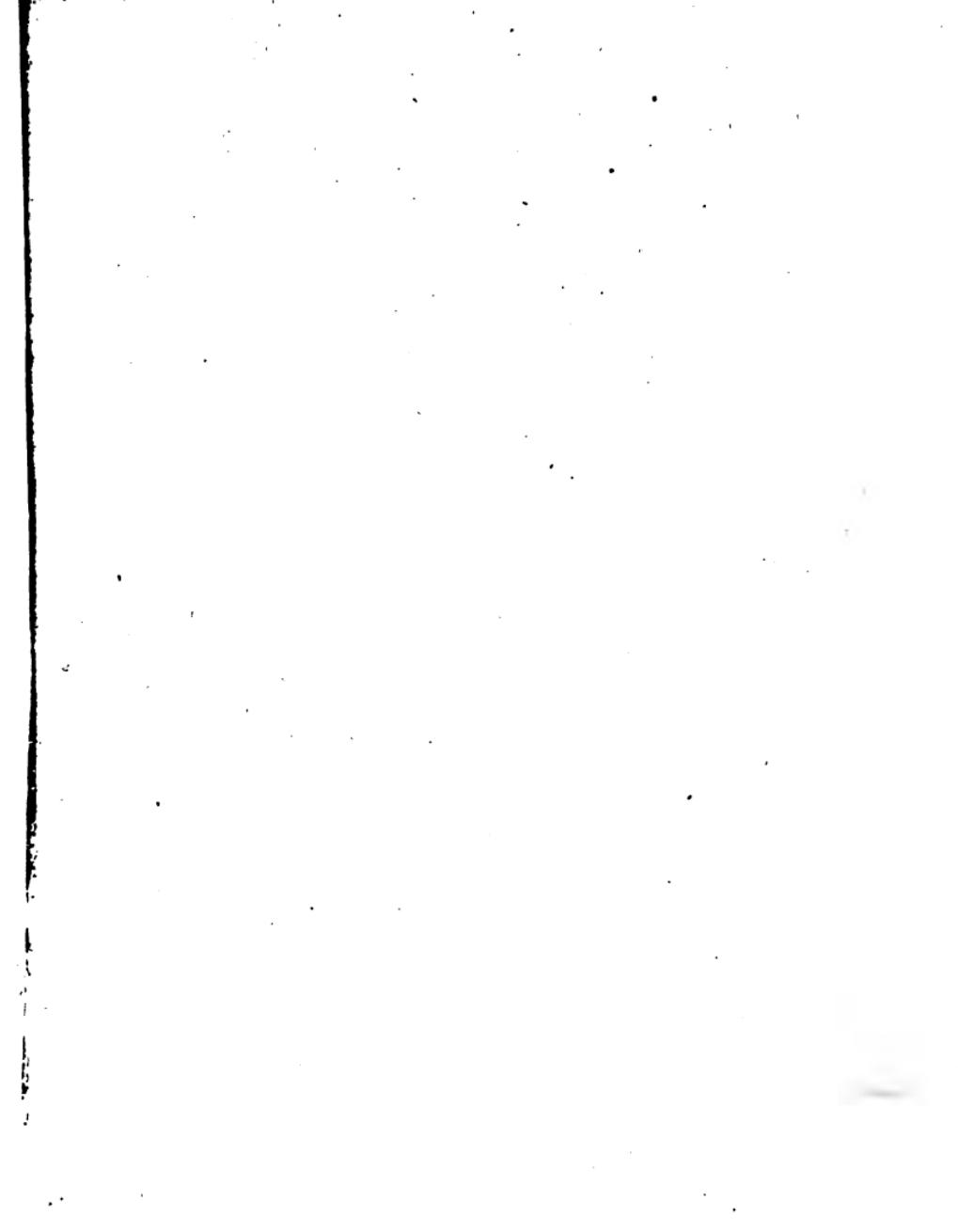
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FROM

Charles Henry Parker

W. B. CLARKE & CARRUTH,
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MAR PLOT CUPID,

BY

VAN SAXON.

"Far from gay cities and the ways of men."

BOSTON:
1883.

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Charles Henry Parker

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1883.

MAR PLOT CUPID,

BY

VAN SAXON.



CHAPTER I.

“O, who can light on as happy a shore
All the world o'er, all the world o'er!

CLEARLY the words rang out on the afternoon air, as KATE STURGIS, in her picturesque boat, rounded one of the many curves of a small lake some twenty or thirty miles from Boston.

The voice must have possessed a charm, if one could judge from the face of the noble Irish setter seated in the bow, with gaze riveted upon his mistress as if loth to lose a syllable from her lips. At all events it was sweet enough to arouse the ambition of a rival, and from the thick woods, guarding the lake like an austere sentinel, so bewitching an echo floated back, that the girl rested on her oar to listen, while “Major” turned with a jealous growl, his loyal soul illy brooking the impertinence. With a series of bounds which boded peril to the light boat, the dog prepared to plunge in pursuit.

“Down, charge!”

With a low cry of disappointment, the dog crouched, casting a look of reproach toward his mistress.

"Bad dog! See what you've done,—look at my flowers crushed and spoilt! Is this the way you fulfil your trust? Why, Major, you are no better than the mongrel Tige, up at the stable! Who would imagine that you lay claim to a noble ancestry? Ah, Major, remember—*Noblesse Oblige!* *Noblesse Oblige!*"

At the last words, the dog's mien changed from the sudden self-abasement, he arose proudly, and with a mute appeal for pardon, resumed his position in the bow with grave dignity.

A few minutes later, the boat landed, and springing lightly ashore, Kate held out her hand to the dusky figure waiting to deliver a package of letters.

"You have a generous mail, Tony," she said pleasantly.

"Yas, Miss," the old servant answered, touching his hat; "'pears like writin come easy t'some fokes! I se fur tak-n de streme lib'ty dis yere 'ticular 'casion, t'respect de cases, an I se deserve in de corner of dis yere, 'Forrard megitly,—so I done tote um long pose mortem an hopes dey r'tains no eble betid-ns."

Kate took the letters, with a smile, gave the flower-basket to major, and while quickening her pace through the orchard lane, broke the seal of the thickest of the letters. A slightly anxious look flitted over

her face as she ran her eye hastily down the first page, but it vanished almost directly, and she was about to dive further into the labyrinth of crossed lines, when she checked herself, and replaced the letter in its envelope.

"No, I won't be so selfish as to read the primal freshness away by myself! Dear little mamma is as much interested in my plan as I, myself, so Major drown your curiosity and we'll hasten in search of a sympathetic ear."

Mrs Sturgis, with "Century" and paper-cutter in hand, was ensconcing herself in one of several hammocks, hanging in sociable proximity from a group of elms, when Kate's eager face confronted her.

"My dear child," she exclaimed, "Why do you rush along at such a speed on a day like this? You look quite flushed!"

"And have I not a right to look flushed, mamma dear, after all my dark forebodings? The letters are here, and the girls are really coming. This is what Chipie says: and without waiting for a response, Kate re-opened her letter, and read:—

"Katrina Sturgis:

You are a *gem!* Only a gem *could* emit the rays of brightness which are now warming into new life two grateful hearts, at least. I wish you

could have seen us while we were reading your letter, for you would have realized our appreciation of your dear self. Every feature in our possession, from Madge's beloved nose up to my waviest wave fairly trembled with joy. It was droll that your letter came just as it did! Mamma and papa were away. We girls had been making calls all the afternoon, and were too tired to do anything but give ourselves up to a fine gossipy evening, together, a pouring rain having shut out the possibility of visitors. Having decided that it was quite time to make up our minds as to our summer flitting, we were asking each other,

‘To what haven of rest shall we flit?’

Everything proposed seemed distasteful! The Campbell's had invited us to visit them at Newport, and Flossy says she will never forgive us if we don't join them at Swampscott, this year. Harold Kennard and his cousins are to be there, it seems, and attractive enough it will be, I suppose, to one craving more of winter festivity, but, you see, neither Madge nor myself covet anything of the kind this summer. We did our duty by society, last winter, and now, tired and worn, we sigh only for quiet. In the midst of our questionings, Madge suddenly visioned an oasis, and exclaimed, ‘O, Chipie, if aunt Paulien would only invite us up to beautiful old Chavenage!’ Hardly

had the words escaped her, when your letter was brought in. Papa thinks that the idea of we girls, with Saratogas, accepting an invitation to Chavenage for the whole summer, preposterous! He throws out grave insinuations as to the effect upon aunt Paulien's nerves, but I know that he is actuated by a sad spirit of envy, and would gladly join us, even uninvited, were his summer plans not already made. He and mamma intend taking a mountain ramble, and to own the truth, Madge and myself are a trifle out of favor because we decline lending the light of our countenances to the jaunt.

But to return to the letter. Your delicious invitation we accept with glowing hearts, and you may expect to see our winsome faces smiling our gratitude from the Saxony Station, at four o'clock, P. M., Tuesday next. By the way, is the little man with the faded green wig, still ticket master? You will remember that I always took a deep interest in that wig! But no more;—conversational topics are so limited when we meet, that I think it wise to economize now.

With love from Madge, and

Your affectionate cousin,

CHIPIE MARGRAVE."

When Kate finished the letter, she tossed it tri-

umphantly into the air, and seated herself opposite Mrs. Sturgis.

"Are n't you glad, mamma?"

"Yes, Kate, I am very glad, for I confess I was beginning to fear lest a disappointment were in store for you. You have thought so much of your little plan."

"Yes, I couldn't have brooked a disappointment, for it is such a pleasure to think of all being together just as when we were little. It will be delightful to forget that we are grown up, and I am so glad that there will be nobody to interrupt our freedom. You don't think that it will be dull for them, mamma?"

"I should suppose that six young people might make Chavenage endurable for a summer," answered Mrs. Sturgis, with a smile, as she began cutting the leaves of her magazine. "The girls know what there is to depend upon for enjoyment, and they have chosen."

"Yes," responded Kate, "the chief inducements which I held out were freedom, rest and harmony of spirit, so the dear girls can't accuse me of inveigling them into solitude under false pretences, if they find it more monotonous than romantic. But I hav'nt a fear about Chipie,—she has a good time wherever she is, and after all, the only thing which Saxony lacks is—people; and if one has people two-thirds of the year, I am sure one ought to be able to do without them the other third."

Kate opened her remaining letters, reading on without comment until she came to a tiny blue sheet in childish chirography. "This is from Winny," she exclaimed, with a laugh. "The darling is enraptured, of course, at the thought of coming, and will be here with the girls. She says, 'How can anybody like fashionable summer places, such as sister Helen always goes to, better than darling old Chavenage with its rare woods and parks, and lakes, and fairy hiding places everywhere!' Bless her sensible little soul, how can anybody? I am sure mamma, that anyone who would decline summering amongst my trees and lanes and ponds, in favor of anything more artificial, is to be pitied and prayed for—is it not so, mamma!"

Mrs. Sturgis smiled indulgently. "I am glad," she said, "that droll old Saxony has such a loyal lover in my girlie."

CHAPTER II.

“**M**IS’ KATE! Mis’ Kate! I specs Ise jis ’bout ruined my reptation dis time for shu! Yah says call yah promp at haf-pas five, an’ now it done be mos’ six.”

With this conscience-stricken announcement, black Princess rapped lustily upon Kate’s door, as if to make up in energy for lack of punctuality.

“Vilet say Ise a lazy little nigger,” she continued volubly, “an it done be all her own fault, anyhow, Mis’ Kate, fur I telled her to shu an wake me fus lick, ‘cause Ise orders to call yah promp.”

“Well, Princess,” answered Kate, who had listened with amusement to the alarmed voice of the little waiting-maid, “fortunately I happened to wake up without any help, this morning, and I’m almost ready to start. Dress yourself for a long, wet walk, and don’t forget your rubbers. We shall find everything dripping with dew at this early hour. Now run

quickly and don't keep me waiting a minute, for we must get back before breakfast."

"Yas, Miss Kate, I isn't gwine t'done keep yah wait-n dis yere time!" and the comical little figure flew down stairs, murmuring to herself like a magpie after the fashion of her kind.

Presently Kate appeared dressed in a blue boating-suit, and armed with baskets and keys. She was evidently in high spirits and poured forth her gladness in a ripple of song.

"Ise reckon yah mighty 'joiced bout yah compney, Mis' Kate," exclaimed Princess, as she took charge of the baskets. "Pears like yah seem so."

"Yes, indeed, Princess," Kate answered merrily. "We are going to make Chavenage a very gay place after to-day. You will think you are back in Washington, and you must do your part towards making the visit a pleasant one by being very thoughtful and attentive to the young ladies."

"Yas, Mis' Kate. I specks yah'll hav right high times! Vilet her say she done reckon I'm gwine t'hav m' hands full a trot-n fur de young leddies, but I telled her ef deys like Mis' Kate Ise no jections."

"You must remember Miss Chipie, I think," said Kate; "She was in Washington with my aunt last winter."

"O, Mis' Kate, are Mis' Chipie gwine t' be one ob

de compney?" cried Princess, her dusky eyes opening wide with delight. "Her is jes splendid, an Ise wonder will her'member me, cause Ise ust t' button her gloves an lace her dresses and eberyting. Her ust t' gib me heaps ob rib-ns an pennies, an twice her guv me some long white gloves wi' fourteen buttons onto um, an I went out onto Pensylvany avnoo an wore um when Madam done know nuffin whar Ise gone. Id have um now, ony ole Abe Lincoln—ole nigger!—he cotched me an tored off four fingers of um jes cause he done hav none hisself. Dats jes like dese common niggars, Mis' Kate!"

Kate smiled, and presently Princess went on:—

"O, my! but did n't her look jes magnifcent when her stepped into de corridge fur de porties! An when Madam ud hav de porties and 'ceptions an all dem ah, de house ud be packed full ob sech splendid gemmen an ledgies, but dey did n't none of um done beat my Mis' Chipie, cause Ise whar I could peek round an see um all, whar Madam could n't catch sight ob me. I seen sech heaps ob swell gemmen in white leather gloves, an coats dat done hav no corners to um, a bow-in an curtsy-n to Mis' Chipie, an I tinks how I help dress her—me an Virginny—in dem shiny trail dresses, an I gits a right big heap ob satsfaction out ob it."

How long the glowing reminiscences would have continued, is uncertain, for the theme was apparently

a fruitful one, but the boat-house being reached, all attention was devoted to getting the boat out, and then to deciding where to go first.

"We will go directly to the beech-grove," said Kate, as they pushed off; "and while I am getting the wild smilax, you, Princess, may fill the smaller basket with Solomon's Seal, and Partridge Berries. I want to make the house into a real woodland bower. Now we will see how much we can accomplish in the next two hours.

Princess was quite as much interested in the work as Kate wished her to be, now that she knew who was to reap the benefit. She applied herself zealously to ferreting out the largest berries, the deepest violets and the most delicate ferns; and when later, they turned towards home, the fragrant burden of blossoms and trailing vines under which they almost tottered, showed that the time had been employed to some purpose.

It was a little after the breakfast hour when Kate, having exchanged her boating suit for a cool white linen, entered the breakfast room. Mr. and Mrs. Sturgis were slowly sipping their chocolate, but sipping it with a long interval between each sip, out of regard for Kate, whose where-a-bouts they were endeavoring to conjecture at the moment of her appearance.

"Katrina," was Mr. Sturgis's greeting, in a tone

half playful, half earnest, "I have a bone to pick with you!"

"Well, papa, I'm quite hungry enough to begin at once. My long tramp has made the thought of even so frugal a *déjeûné*, tempting."

"Katrina, I regret that you hunger after a bone of contention. Your tongue would doubtless find refreshment in it, but 'tis a weakening diet which I pray you avoid. Now, my dear," turning to Mrs. Sturgis, "won't you give Katrina her coffee that silence may be insured while I admonish a bit."

"Why, papa, you look savage. What have I been doing to deserve such menacing glances?"

"You shall hear. Unless my memory plays me false, my fair and only daughter exacted a promise from me to make a grand finale to our morning rides by going over to Ashley, this morning, Accordingly"—

"O, papa, I forgot"—

"Wait,—wait,—I am speaking! Accordingly the horses were saddled at the time agreed upon, and they and I *waited*,—patiently, of course—for this veracious daughter to present herself. How long we waited, it is unnecessary to state, but finally my suspicions were aroused, and I undertook to investigate matters."

"O, spare me, I beg!" cried Kate, with laughing

mortification. "What can I say to excuse my careless forgetfulness? I"—

"My dear, is Kate's cup empty?" broke in Mr. Sturgis, again turning to his wife; and then he continued, his brows contracted:

"I sent to your room and found that you and the black imp had started off on some expedition—the land knows where—while I was left to my own happy reflections and a solitary trot. Katrina, I came very near losing my temper."

"I'm delighted that you did n't," responded Kate, mischievously, "for now you can temper your remarks to me, and spare me further humiliation. But truly, papa, I do beg your pardon! My only excuse is, that the arrivals of to-day have filled my mind and crowded everything else out. I am ashamed to confess how entirely I forgot my promise. But *shall* you miss our morning rides together, very much?"

"I missed this one," was the laconic answer.

"I wish you would invite Chipie to ride with you, mornings, papa! It would be such fun for her and for you, too! You need n't have a fear of being deserted if you issue invitations! We girls are all very proud of you with your lovely white side-whiskers and moustaches! You look so like a grand general when you are mounted on black Brutus, that we always feel

the spirit of Joan of Arc rise within us as we prance along by your side."

"Ah, thank you! I'm glad to learn that the general impression which I make is so inspiring!" Then, addressing Mrs. Sturgis, "What took Grove off, this morning, in such a hurry? The carriage left just as I came down."

"He received a telegram from Mr. Withrow last evening, saying that he was to leave for Europe, to-day, and should be in Boston for an hour or two. So Grove hoped to catch him by taking the mail-train. He will come out on one of the afternoon trains."

* * * * *

Old Farmer Benson and his good-wife were a kindy couple who lived in a small cottage within a stone's throw of Chavenage. For fifty years or more, they had lived in that one little nook where every passer-by proved unconsciously, a good Samaritan, furnishing, as he was sure to do, speculative food to the observing pair. Everybody and everything connected with the Chavenage estate was regarded with especial interest by them, and they never wearied of cogitating upon the "curus ways of city-folk."

Upon this particular afternoon, as Kate passed the cottage, on her way to the dépôt, for she had determined to have the girls all to herself the first half hour,

Farmer Benson caught sight of her just as she was disappearing around the bend of the road.

"Wal, I swaney!" he ejaculated, with a knowing nod towards his wife, "Suthin or tother's up or my name aint Zekil Benson! There goes Miss Triney, a strekin it along like chain lightenin, an' she a settin all soul alone onto the front seat. I'll bet," with another wise nod, "you'll see that eer kerridge a comin back packed full, or I miss my guess! She's got that black devil of a horse, too, that aint fit for nothin only a circus!"

"Come, come, Mr. Benson," said Mrs. Benson, reprovingly, "I would n't use perfane langrage ef I was you—it aint pretty!" and wiping her spectacles with a sigh of resignation, she added: "Well, well, it does beat all how these eer city fokes do go on! Comp'ney, comp'ney, the hull time! Never contented 'less they're havin fokes a comin an a goin from week in to week out."

"I tell yer that ere gal don't let the grass grow under them horses feet when she gits the reins! It's lucky they're fed up higher'n a kite, or they wouldn't stan' it long. Now I'd jes like ter know who's on the carpet this time!"

Kate would have been highly amused could she have witnessed the excitement which she and her guests were causing in this humble abode, but she

had reached the station unconscious of everything save her own pleasure. The square in front of the shabby little station was full of vehicles of one kind and another. Evidently a well filled train was expected. Saxony, the last stopping place on a branch road from Oldtown, was a manufacturing village, and at this hour was peaceful enough, though two hours later the streets would be thronged with the mill operatives,—men and women.

As Kate sat, impatiently listening for the distant car whistle, her attention was suddenly attracted by an old-fashioned coupé and a pair of grey horses, drawn close to the platform. She leaned forward, and after a moment's scrutiny, in which her attempt to catch a glimpse of the coachman was baffled, she exclaimed to herself:

“What! Can it be General Winthrop’s carriage? I do ‘nt know the horses, but surely that is his coupé! No one else in Saxony has anything like it. I wonder if it is possible that the Winthrops are in America, and are coming here for the summer!”

At this point her queries were interrupted by the piercing whistle of the locomotive, which always gave warning of its approach by a series of prolonged shrieks, as if in triumph at having reached its haven in safety.

The prim coachman belonging to the mysterious

equipage, descended from his perch and stood by the door, but the train had stopped and Kate's eyes were directed towards the crowd of laughing, package-laden passengers. Not until the train was nearly empty did Kate recognize Chipie's piquant, olive face and dazzling teeth. Behind her tripped slight, elegant Madge, and closely following, came Winny, with eyes like two dewy violets.

"Kate, my dear Kate," was Chipie's first salutation, "confess that the sight of us, *en masse*, has already produced a pang of remorse for the peace about to vanish from Chavenage!"

"Do nothing of the kind, Kate," chimed in Madge, gaily, "You've been pining for the hour to come, have n't you?"

"Isn't my haggard face a proof of what the waiting has been?" laughed Kate, as she sprang from the carriage. "Yes, Winny, Eagle will stand till we've kissed all around, only don't stand too near the wheel!" and then followed gushing girl greetings in which questions and answers were wofully confused, and each interrupted the other, all with the naïve disregard of conventional rules which frequently distinguishes well-bred girls upon like occasions. It took some time to find their trunk checks for Cæsar, who stood at a distance waiting, and to arrange themselves and their innumerable little packages satisfac-

torily, but it was accomplished at last, and away they whirled over the red bridge, out of the village and into the pleasant country road.

"And now girls," exclaimed Kate, suddenly turning in her seat, "was I audacious in getting you up here to bury your charms in stupid Saxony? Frankly, has n't Newport looked more alluring than ever before, this week?"

"Not a bit of it!" cried Chipie and Madge simultaneously. "But," added Chipie, "was my letter such a luke-warm answer, that it left you with doubts upon the subject?"

"Your letter was very jolly indeed, Chipie, but are you sure that you realize that there is n't a possibility of a bit of a romance creeping into the summer? You know there are n't any people about here to make romances! Not one cavalier does this benighted region boast, save your own cousin Grove and our boy Donald. So you see what is before you!"

"I see, and breathe a prayer of thanksgiving," ejaculated Chipie, with amusing fervor. "Kate, do n't lisp it to anyone, but I'm so glad that there is n't a possibility that anything savoring of a flirtation can occur for the next few months, that I feel as if I were on wings. You can't think what a relief it is!"

For a minute Chipie really looked serious. The other girls exchanged significant glances, and then

Madge laughed in such a provoking little way, that she sometimes had, and said flippantly :

"Chipie *sounds* as if she were here in search of balm of Gilead, does n't she?"

"If she is, she shall have it, and balm, moonwort and myrrh, also; we have them all at home," responded Kate quickly. "But girls," she continued, "I must tell you what I saw just before the train came in. I've been puzzling over it, and all to no purpose, thanks to my stupidity in letting the carriage pass without noticing its occupants. You remember General Winthrop?"

"Was he the icy looking man who used to pass Chavenage, on horseback, every morning," asked Madge.

"Yes, and the uncle of my old playfellow, Jerrold Winthrop. You know the square, stone house, with the garden and conservatories, and the lions at the entrance, about an eighth of a mile beyond Chavenage? That is their place,—Wildwood, they call it; and for four years it has been shut up. I hadn't an idea that it had been opened, until this afternoon, when what should I see drawn up in front of the station but the General's old coupé. Fancy my astonishment! Of course, the General, or Jerrold, or both must have returned! It is very odd that we've heard nothing of it."

"Returned!" questioned Chipie, "Where have they been?"

"Living abroad for the last four years. They left just after Jerrold got through at Harvard. Why Jerrold is a little over twenty-three now—he was nineteen the very day he was graduated—! I wonder if he is much changed."

"Oh, I remember him quite well," exclaimed Chipie, with a laugh. "I never saw him but once, and that was when we were children. He came over to see you with a musty volume of legends under his arm, one day when we were getting ready for a fine romp in the barn, and persisted in keeping you pinned down in a corner listening to them all the afternoon. How I hated him! I can plainly see just how he looked perched beside you, in his aggravatingly faultless clothes!"

"Yes, he *was* a little prig," said Kate rather thoughtfully. "But, really, his uncle was more to blame for that than anyone else. He used to keep him, after his parents died, shut up with him in that gloomy Wild-wood library, poring over mouldy books, until all the simplicity of childhood was lost. Nothing was ever '*later*' with Jerrold, it was always '*posterior*,' and I remember that his common use of the word '*in incorrigible*,' when he was about ten years of age, used to keep me in a mild state of awe."

"Why, Madge!" cried Chipie, with sudden emphasis.

"What!" responded Madge, with the same inflection.

"Do you remember the gentleman who came in just as the train was starting?"

"The rather *distingué* looking man who sat down two seats in front of us? Yes."

"It was Kate's Jerrold—I'm sure of it!" said Chipie decisively.

"What makes you think so!" asked Kate, with interest.

"First, because he looked like the infant Jerrold grown up, and then I'm sure I heard some one call him, Mr. Winthrop, when he got off the train. I had forgotten about it till now!"

"Then he was in the coupè when it passed us at the station," said Kate.

"No, he got off at Rawley," put in Madge. "I didn't like him; he was quite too pedantic looking!" and Madge's pretty lip curled impatiently.

"Oh, hurrah! hurrah!" interrupted Winny, half rising as she excitedly waved her hankerchief in the air. "I see the red roofs of the dear old house and stables!"

"And isn't it elixir just to look into that wilderness of shrubbery?" said Chipie.

"There's aunt Paulien," cried Madge the next minute, "waving her hankerchief from the side veranda."

The wide gate stood open, and Eagle, spurred on by the voices behind him, sped up the long; smooth driveway.

"And now, girls," said Mrs. Sturgis, after the greetings were well over, "I sha'n't let you talk any more, for Grove will be here in less than half an hour, and you won't have more than time to prepare for dinner."

"Kate, pray tell me who is the black sprite turning somersaults under the elms," asked Chipie as Mrs. Sturgis laughingly drove the girls towards the stairs.

"Why, Chipie, is it possible that you do n't recognize those elongated heels? That is none other than aunt Malley's mournful Princess. Uncle Hal brought her here for us to keep safe while he and aunt Malley are in Florida. She is a grandchild, you know, of uncle Hal's old nurse, and a spoilt little monkey she is. She remembers you as a paragon of all earthly excellence. But here we are! Madge, you will have your own room, next to mamma's, and Winnie shall have the 'Robins' Nest, because she is our wee birdie; and Chipie, you may try to find comfort in Utopia."

"That wo'n't be hard," exclaimed Chipie, as she stood in the doorway, before entering, and drew a breath of keen pleasure. "But first let me give one peep into your Dreamland," and she stepped into Kate's room which was a poem in its hazy draperies of pale blue, and soft white lace.

"Kate this room has helped materially to mould you!"

"Kate, don't let Chipie talk, or look at anything until she has made herself presentable for dinner," called Madge, from her room, as she surveyed herself complacently in the glass. " You know her propensity for keeping everybody waiting!"

CHAPTER III.

THE dinner bell rang as the girls appeared at the head of the stairs, and at the same moment a hearty laugh and an ejaculation of relief came from the hall below.

“ Well, this is a pretty reception to give a fellow ! I’ve been lying in the *sans-souci* for the last fifteen minutes, patiently listening to the distant murmur of voices, and at motherdy’s entreaty forebore to make a sign of my arrival, lest I should interrupt the arrangement of the Sapphos, and thus cause the reputation of the dinner to suffer. I began to think it a case of Tennyson’s Brook, over again,—you remember how it went on ? ” and amidst a tumult of exclamations, Grove Sturgis placed himself at the foot of the stairs.

“ Grove Sturgis, you do n’t deserve any sort of a re-

ception, after such innuendoes," said Chipie, who was foremost. "But we are n't responsible for anything reprehensible which we may do to-day; we are in a state of fermentation when only the froth of our natures comes to the surface; we hav n't enough of the essence of self respect to challenge an incivility when offered!"

"Come, dear boy," joined Madge, catching Grove's hand, and turning him about, "we want to see if you look pale at the prospect before you,—a trio of capricious guests,—and you the one Knight!"

"Oh, I'm a complete stoic as to my countenance; not a vestige of perturbation will you discover, my charming Madge."

"We discover that you are a poor dissembler," said Chipie, "We see the illy concealed rapture gleaming from your eyes! 'T is a rare thing to meet with so well-favored a group of lassies as this. We congratulate you upon your good fortune, sir! But see! auntie is trying to look amiable, when all the time she is incensed at the thought of her cooling viands."

"Aunt Paulien, do 'nt make me sit next to Grove," said Madge, with a pensive air of appeal, as they entered the dining-room. "I have such a humiliating remembrance of the last time I had him for a neighbor, when he declared that my nose looked like a rocking-chair."

"Yes, and what were *you* doing at the time of the remark, allow me to ask? I have some reason to cherish the memory, also!" retorted Grove.

"Squeezing lemon-juice upon my sardines, I believe," answered Madge, pensively.

"And is that all you remember of the lemon-juice?"

"Why! Was there anything else worth remembering?" languidly questioned Madge.

"Enough to warrant my comparison, I think! I leave it to any of the just company to decide whether a nose, however symmetrical under ordinary circumstances, would n't assume an odd expression if viewed while a fine spray of lemon-juice was being sent into a fellow's eye!"

"Grove, the acidity of your remark was excusable," said Chipie, as she turned to Mr. Sturgis, who was addressing her.

"I believe, my dear," he was saying, "that you have been dissipating to a goodly extent at the gay capital since your last sojourn at Chavenage! Were you surfeited with gaiety, or are you fresh for another campaign?"

"No, I believe I'm wholly content to stay at home and enjoy my choice little Boston, next winter. Oh, uncle Malcolm, I was a dreadful butterfly of fashion, last year! You would have been shocked at me! But one can't help being light and airy in Wash-

ington :—I'm intellectual enough in Boston, but when in Rome, you know—”

“ Did they make a politician of you ! ” interrupted Kate, smiling.

“ The last part of the season I came to a realizing sense of my somewhat superficial knowledge as to the affairs of the nation, Hence I was frequently escorted to the capitol, by special request of uncle Hal, when I did my best to imbibe truth and wisdom. Uncle Malcolm I tried so hard to get up a few thrills at finding myself in the presence of that august body, but it was of no use,—not a thrill would come ! ”

“ Ah ! I'm surprised,” laughed Mr. Sturgis, “ but surely you gained some profit from your pilgrimages ? ”

“ Indeed I did ! ” replied Chipie, with enthusiasm. “ I comprehended for the first time in my life, uncle Hal's greatness. It had never been borne in upon me before ; but no doubt was left when I observed the long processions rambling about the senate-chamber, clinging for dear life to note-books and autograph albums. The expressions of hero-worship which lighted the countenances as one by one they seated themselves in my uncle's chair, viewing his shabby pen-holder and untidy blotter with mild awe ! Why really, I felt abashed at the reckless way in which I had been neglecting my privileges ! ”

"I trust you improved them after your awakening," laughed Mr. Sturgis, amused at Chipie's volubility.

"To the utmost, uncle Malcolm," replied Chipie. "After that day the poor man invariably came home to find me comfortably ensconced in his favorite arm-chair, my face blanched with a new born awe. He was no longer simply uncle Hal with a bald head!"

Here, Winny, who had been waiting for an opportunity to put in a question edge-ways, asked;

"Auntie, is n't Donald coming home this week, after all? I so hoped that he would be here!"

"Yes, dear, according to his last letter from Mt. Desert, we may expect to see him the latter part of the week. The fishing expedition was gotten up by Frank Spaulding, and the four boys started off the second day of their vacation with the old sea-captain whom they met at Bar Harbor, last year."

"Pardon me for bringing up the subject of noses, again," said Grove, with a mischievous look at Madge, "but Winny, when Donald comes home, be considerate and appear oblivious to the fact that the sensitive young fisherman has a nose, if you wish to remain in his good graces. His yesterday's letter alluded pathetically to the grilled feature, and awakened in me these simple lines.

There was a young lad of S.
Whom the gods did wonderfully bless;—
They endowed him a nose
Which you'd never suppose
Could be ruled by the sun with such zest."

"I believe that the laddie is rather self-righteous over that nose, is he not?" laughed Chipie.

"Yes, the one vanity as yet developed," said Grove.
"Fancies it the poetry of a nose, I believe."

"And being now, a nose-gay, it is poetical indeed," observed Chipie.

"Are n't we going to begin our good times by a row on the dear old lake?" asked Madge, regarding, with lofty disdain, her sister, whose punning proclivities were a sad grief to her.

"Most assuredly, yes," said Kate. "If we start now, we shall get the last glimmerings of the sun-set, and then the moon."

"Take extra wraps," said Mrs. Sturgis, "for the air changes so quickly after sunset. The evenings here are quite sharp much of the time."

"Motherdy, can't we even upon this festive occasion, persuade you to accompany us?"

"Thank you, Grove, but you know what a tyrant my head is! However, I shall be with you in spirit," and watching the gay party set off, Mrs. Sturgis smiled softly as the echo of voices died away. She had no fear that Chavenage would prove a dull retreat, Castle of Indolence though it was. She had passed the summers of her life within its charming shelter, and Kate, too, had lived a dreamy childhood and girlhood, breathing the odors of its pines and

spruces, and the breezes of the hills and lakes, until they had become a part of her nature. Grove, the elder son, had just returned, after some years abroad, and was revelling in home comfort.

It was late when the rowers returned, and then came the unpacking of trunks.

"Is yours to come first?" asked Kate as Chipie knelt down and threw up her trunk cover.

"Yes, I am the most venerable member of the circle," answered Chipie. "Madge, do up your crimps, while I am displaying my pomps and vanities;—otherwise, you will plead sleepiness when your turn comes, and expect to make a martyr of your poor sister."

Madge laughed languidly. "She sounds sisterly, does she not, Kate?"

"Sisterly and suspicious are synonymous in this case, my dear," said Chipie. "I have to watch that girl sharply, Kate, or she imposes upon me shamefully"—

"There was a young woman from Town,
To whom a new trinket or gown
Was so alluringly dear,
That her friends paled with fear
O'er this frivolous young woman from Town."

Grove's sole comment as he passed the open door on his way to his own room. No response was vouchsafed, and Chipie went on unmoved; "Now, Katrina,

please inspect the exterior of this trunk, for it is worthy! It is one of four, which bore within its capacious depth, the paraphernalia which helped, last winter, to make your cousin the star about which all others moved but as insignificant satellites. What say you, dear one, when I confess that this very trunk secreted fifteen rare and exquisitely wrought fans which, in their turn, were waved before your cousin's little face, with undulating grace, by the hands of foreign ambassadors and the great ones of our own land!"

"I see that the trunk *has* a beatified expression," responded Kate, as, with arms resting on the back of a chair, she looked down upon Chipie, who kept up a succession of absurd remarks as she drew one article after another to light.

"Madge, has Chipie given up her old habit of having serious intervals," exclaimed Kate at length, entirely giving way to her amusement.

"I do n't wonder that you ask," answered Madge. "But really, Kate, she can be terribly sensible at times. Sometimes I am actually frightened when I see her sitting beside Dr. Weiss, or old Professor Haffman, talking away upon the most heathenish subjects. Why *I* have n't an idea what they mean! Truly, Kate, I heard that girl, only the other day, holding forth upon —what was it, Chipie—anthropomorphic theories—was that it?—and cosmogony, and—but oh! it makes my head whirl to think of it!"

"Does she look as if she enjoyed it?" asked Kate, laughing.

"Her expression seems to be genuine," admitted Madge. "And I suppose she must understand what she is talking about, for Professor Haffman and the other old pokes listen to her as respectfully, and—and *she* talks just as much as they do!"

Kate held up her hands incredulously.

"And what do you do, meanwhile, poor child?"

"I? I sit and shake for fear they will turn upon me and ask my opinion upon the jargon."

"Have they ever?" questioned Winny with interest.

"No, fortunately!" replied Madge taking a caromel. "Sometimes they glance towards me, out of courtesy, and I smile encouragingly back!"

Here Chipie caught up from the corner of her trunk a pair of large green goggles. She put them on, and sank back against an arm-chair benignantly regarding her audience.

"They look well!" observed Kate graciously. "Do they flatter us?"

"They are green, not rose-color," replied Chipie still looking about seriously. "But how do you like me in them, Kate?"

"They give you a fine literary aspect!" replied Kate with mock earnestness.

"*Literary?* Bless you, Kate! I respect you as never before!" was Chipie's pleased response.

"Why? Is that your ambition?"

"Thanks to you, my darling, yes!" exclaimed Chipie, with gravity. "My ambition has been awakened! I am no longer the frivolous girl you have known in years past. My girlie, you wrote me a sweet, a touching letter, some months ago, in which you dwelt upon the desirableness of having a definite aim in life. You seemed to feel, dear, that we girls were dwindling—were degenerating! In fact, that our only salvation from inanity lay in choosing a vocation. I"—

"Chipie Margrave, I'll never write you a serious letter again? Are n't you ashamed!" cried Kate, half laughing and half vexed.

"Hush, I am in deadly earnest!" was the vehement answer. "I pondered over your well worded epistle, and saw that it savored of truth. But the way seemed hedged up! Partial Nature did not endow me with an artist's soul, like your own; the lack of the divine spark I discovered one gloomy day last summer, when, after spending a morning amongst the brushes trying to paint a bit of white satin drapery, I took it to mamma to criticise. Picture my dismay when the misguided soul began, mistaking my poor drapery for an old wall, and the pearly shadows of the folds for moss! 'T was a blow,—but my determined spirit soared aloft. Hither and thither, I turned me for some path wherein to shine; help came by chance.

One morning, in looking over my old school-books, I came upon a collection of my early essays; unfastening the cherry ribbon, I began a careless perusal, and, as I read, there shot into my heart a ray of light: —signs of awakening genius were surely discernible in the loosely penned pages. On the back of each, in dear Madame Grenville's flowing caligraphy, were the inspiring words, ‘Subject well treated,—100’ It was enough! When the midnight bells rang out, I laid away my treasures, and with burning cheeks and dilating eyes, cast myself into Madge's arms, breathing rapturously, ‘*Eureka! Eureka!*’ My life-work was before me,—I was an authoress in embryo!”

“O, come, Chip,” exclaimed Madge, nodding, in spite of her sister's animated voice, “are n't you ready to help me? Please do! I'm dreadfully sleepy!”

“Yes, Madge, she shall help you,” exclaimed Kate, Chipie ignoring Madge's coaxing glance, “We'll have no mercy on her after this breach of honor! But Chipie,” she added, preparing to lead her towards Madge's room, “why do you adopt the goggles?”

“Because, my dear Kate, unfortunately I require them to give my face a decidedly literary character, and unless I possess an outward sign, how am I to be credited with the inner depths? Henceforth regard me as one, like yourself, with a purpose in life! Your letter has fulfilled its mission!”

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning Kate and Chipie drove over to Wesley, a mile or two beyond Oldtown, to call upon Madam Tyler, an old family friend, who was stopping for a few days at the hotel. On their way back, as they came up with the stage, which had just set off with the few passengers which the train had brought, they recognized a pair of large eyes peering at them from the window, and almost instantly the horses were reined in, and a minute or two after, a handsome lad of fifteen, loaded with fishing-rods and sporting gear enough to stock a country shop, appeared in the doorway, followed by a pair of pointers. With some difficulty he swung himself down, and as fast as his equipments would permit approached the phæton, which had also stopped.

"Why, Donald," exclaimed both girls at once, "What a delightful surprise! How did it happen? We didn't expect you before to-morrow, at the earliest."

"Wait a minute, and I'll give you the whole story," was the gay reply, as the boy began divesting himself of his trappings and stowing them away. "My arms are about done for, steering this precious luggage through without damage; every man and woman on the train has taken a turn at trying to smash something, and one old fellow, hang him! was in such a hurry to get off, that he sat down on my prize rod, and would have snapped it if I hadn't helped him up on the end of a pin. But Chip, it's awfully jolly to see you here; how do you do?" and then he added, noticing his cousin's look of scrutiny, "What is it,—is anything the matter with me? Is my face smutty?"

"Not particularly," answered Chipie, laughing, "But I'm trying to convince myself that you are really the little fellow whom I saw a year ago in the pretty cadet jacket! You've grown out of all recognition, child, but you certainly do us credit; if you keep on as you've begun, who knows that you wo'n't rival Grove, some bright day!"

"No doubt of it," replied Donald, the sun-bronzed cheek showing a bright glow. "Much obliged for the compliment; but how do you girls happen to be careering about in this double phæton?"

"We've been calling upon Madam Tyler; she is staying at the hotel for a few days," said Kate, "and mamma wanted us to take her back with us to spend the night, but the dear old lady is lame and could n't bear the long drive. But how is it, dear, that we have you to-day?"

"Well, Spaulding's father came down with vertigo, or something of the kind, and sent for him to go home; and Tom had to decamp because he sprained his wrist and knocked out one of his teeth, yesterday; Ned got homesick, the little muff—and so your humble servant thought he might as well toddle along and look after his family. How's Win?"

"Trying to make Uncle Malcolm a substitute for yourself; she will be so glad to see you," said Chipie."

The ride was mostly taken up by Donald's account of his excursion, full of boyish adventures, and not lacking in enough of hair-breadth escapes from danger to make the expedition an exciting one.

"I tell you, girls, it's something more than sport, roughing it in those Maine woods; it's glorious! And about a week after we got there, we stumbled over one of the jolliest old fellows you ever saw; he was somewhere about forty or fifty, I should think, but there was n't another shot like him in the party, and there was n't a thing in the way of hunting or fishing, or anything else worth knowing, for that matter, that he was n't primed in."

"Who was he?" asked Kate.

"Well, at first we thought him a Prof., though he didn't seem exactly like one, either; but he was an out and out brick, and was the means of keeping us fellows civilized, and——"

But at this moment a bend in the road disclosed the lake, and upon its sparkling surface; the Penelope was seen approaching the shore.

"Hurrah!" cried Donald, not waiting to finish his sentence; "There's Grove, old fellow, as big as life, and that nymph in the bow is Madge, of course! Let's give them a salute!" and suiting the action to the words, he raised his voice to a deafening pitch; half as much volume would have done duty; both heads turned simultaneously, and across the waters came the confused murmur of voices. The oars began to move rapidly, and as the boat touched shore, Madge sprang out and disappeared in the direction of the house, and by the time the carriage had arrived, her signal had brought all the family to light.

Winny rushed into Donald's arms as he held them out to her.

"Well, Win." exclaimed Donald, after they had gazed at each other in some astonishment, and discovered how each had grown since their last meeting, "are you ready to take some more lessons in fish-baiting? You made a failure of it, you know, the last time I tried to teach you."

Winny tried to look the repugnance which she felt at the remembrance, and answered bravely :

" I'll try to be courageous, Donnie, but I can't help thinking, still, that it must be wicked to stick the hooks through the poor helpless frogs and grasshoppers!"

" Oh, little pearly-face, hav'n't you given up that idea, yet? You're too tender-hearted! The grasshoppers like the fun of it, for it gives them a chance to see something they never saw before. Here, you may have this jolly rod for your own if you'll promise to be manly and not look frightened when you're sticking the little fellows."

When Kate and Chipie came down stairs, half an hour later, Grove called them into the billiard-room where he was amusing himself by defeating an imaginary foe. With a droll expression on his face, he threw down his cue, and exclaimed : " Girls, I have some news for you ! "

" News?" said both girls, looking curious.

" Yes," said Grove ; " Whom do you think we are to have for neighbors, this summer?"

For a minute the girls looked puzzled, and then Kate exclaimed quickly :

" Why, the *Winthrops*, of course ;—Chipie, we actually forgot to speak of your having seen Jerrold!"

" When did you see him?" asked Grove, looking surprised.

"Coming up on the train. We talked about him on our way from the station, and then forgot to speak of it afterwards. Kate doesn't seem particularly interested in her old friend, does she?"

"I should think not," answered Grove, still looking a little surprised. "Winthrop would feel highly flattered, methinks, if he knew the amount of interest which you've displayed, Kate, in his return after a four years' absence!"

"I know it, poor fellow,—" said Kate deprecatingly; "it was shameful in me to forget it, but we've had so many things to talk about, that it entirely left my mind. But don't think I'm not interested in the event! Has he come yet?"

"Yes, arrived about an hour after you left the house; and not only Jerrold and his uncle, but a friend who has been travelling with them,—a nice sort of a fellow, I'm inclined to think, though a trifle young; a fledgling I suppose Chipie will call him, holding youth, as she does, in high scorn."

"And what about Jerrold?" asked Kate. "Is he very much changed and improved?"

"Somewhat changed," said Grove; "he is four years older, for one thing, and I should say that that might be a good thing in his case. You are aware, Kate, that I never doted upon Jerrold!"

"O dear!" ejaculated Chipie, with disconsolate

accents ; " it is really too bad ! I do n't like it a bit, and I wish that the Winthrops and their fledgling had remained in Europe, instead of coming to spoil all our fine plans."

" How are they likely to spoil them ? " asked Grove.

" By being here at all," replied Chipie. " I thought that it would be such a beautiful, free summer all to ourselves, away from annoyance of that kind, and here we are, the very first thing, threatened with two intruders, whom none of us care a penny for ! Did n't you say, Kate, that Mr. Winthrop was in the habit of coming and going, as he pleased ? "

" Yes, but that was long ago ; it wo n't be necessary to continue the old familiarity, unless we like. I 'm sure I shall be as indignant as yourself if anything occurs to disturb the *dolce farniente* existence which we 've laid out."

" And pray, do you intend to let two harmless youths massacre your peace and comfort ? Well ! well ! girls are the most incomprehensible creatures !" and Grove looked with affected dismay at the annoyed faces opposite him.

" Grove, I wish you would n't give yourself the habit of speaking in that tone," said Chipie, crossly, " It is natural that we should feel displeased ! "

Chipie was beyond question aggrieved. A little sanitary project which she had been pleasantly har-

boring, must now be relinquished. When it had been settled that she should spend the summer at Chavenage, with her usual enthusiasm, she made up her mind to reap the full benefit of the bracing air, and out-door life. Accordingly, she devised a suit, the utility of which was unquestionable, although it detracted strangely from the grace of the wearer. She spoke of it as a *reform* suit, and as she held it up for her cousins' inspection, she dwelt with fervor upon its simplicity and lack of superfluous material, exulting over the freedom with which it would enable her to ramble over hill and dale. But now at the *entrée* of two fashionable young men, she felt her courage begin to waver, for unfortunately this sensible garment gave her an oddly childish aspect. The dream of freedom was over, she told herself.

"*Ma chère* cousine, I beg your pardon, if I've wounded you," said Grove, regarding Chipie with amusement. "But when you come to consider the matter, don't you see that it isn't a bad thing, after all! Were we to have uninterrupted peace all summer, before it should be half over, you would weary of the monotony, and be sighing for livelier scenes; as it is, Jerrold will be amusing,—after a fashion,—and his friend will be an agreeable fellow enough; so cheer up, little one!"

"I have no heart to cheer up," said Chipie, unap-peased.

"But another consideration is," continued Grove, "that they will be sure to fancy that neat little suit of yours; it gives you such an air of *näiveté*!"—just the thing to attract travel-worn hearts like theirs, you know!"

Grove looked supremely unconscious of having touched upon Chipie's woe, and Madge, who had come in shortly before, remarked complaisantly:

"I agree with you, girls, that it is extremely unfortunate as it must necessarily change the character of our summer, somewhat. However, I suppose that there is nothing to be done but to resign ourselves gracefully to the intrusion!"

She spoke in the tone of regret which the occasion called for, and permitted an appropriate expression of annoyance to veil her features, but at the same time she could n't help remembering with much satisfaction the becoming morning dress of delicate green with its marguerite trimmings, and feeling glad that she had persisted in having the extra five inches added to the train.

Grove laughed good-naturedly, and praised her for accepting her cross so amiably, and forthwith proceeded to make her an example to Chipie and Kate, who still remaided unreconciled.

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT are you proposing, Chipie?" asked Madge, entering the *sans-souci*, where one after another the family had strolled from the breakfast-room. "I hope it is n't anything that will require too much exertion!"

"I'm proposing, Miss Indolence, that we spend our morning in the woods; will that be too much for your lady-ship to attempt?"

"No, not if Grove will hold that famous big umbrella of his, over me, while we are getting there! And we must wear veils, too, for this morning sun will turn us into perfect gypsies!"

"That is what I mean it to do to me," replied Chipie. "It is my ambition to become mellowed into as rich a tint as that cabinet shows, before Fall! But if you object to it," she added with a good-natured laugh, "perhaps Grove will wrap you in the protecting folds of his Adirondack blanket!"

"Will Chipie appear *en costume?*" asked Grove, seriously. "The only thing to regret is, that our friends from abroad will not, by any possible chance, catch a glimpse of the trig little affair!"

"Why?" asked all the girls at once.

"Because they started early this morning upon a week's hunting expedition, and are, in all probability, fifty miles away by now! Jerrold, whom I saw, for a minute, on the way to the dépôt, made very especial inquiries for all the family, and will call as soon as he returns. Young Godfrey, his friend, is making a sort of a martyr of him, I fancy!"

"Well, Chipie, shall we await your change of costume?" asked Kate, smiling. "You see you are quite safe in the bosom of your family!"

Chipie had become animated at Grove's disclosure; she had been wondering if she dared to wear her precious "reform," and run the risk of encountering the two gentlemen. But now, the obstacle to her comfort was removed, and with cheerful alacrity she left the room, to get ready.

When she returned, the others were waiting on the balcony, and hailed her with shouts of laughter, which did n't in the least disturb her equanimity, and with much zest she began to point out the advantages she now possesed over the girls with their long skirts. The suit consisted of a short gray flannel skirt; a blouse

waist, unadorned save by a wide sailor collar ; long grey gloves and a broad rimmed hat—so broad that, with the short dress, it gave a toad-stool effect. The only signs of frivolity being, a soft, cherry silk scarf knotted loosely around the throat, and a bunch of daisies and grasses which adorned one side of the capacious hat.

That Chipie had passed beyond the hoop and jump-rope period, nobody would have imagined, for although full medium height, the style of dress denied it.

"I wish, Chip, that Mr. Allyn could get a squint at you," cried Donald, with his usual disregard of rhetoric. "Wouldn't it be fun alive to see his eye-glass go up, and his pink moustaches tremble, and hear his manly voice gasp, 'And pway what is that wemarkable kweture, yonder,' and then, 'What! ith it pothible that that ware kweture can so terwibly metamorphose herself!'"

"Fortunately for Mr. Allyn's fastidious soul, Donald, he is as many miles from us as are our new neighbours. The sylvan creatures whom alone we shall meet, will look but to admire!" and with careless ease Chipie seated herself in the boat, casting commiserating glances the while at Kate and Madge, who with some difficulty, were arranging themselves.

"Donald, let Chipie take your place, please, for a time. I want to see how she handles an oar," said

Grove. "That is one thing which we mean to make you proficient in, my dear girl; it is a part of country living, you know!"

"Yes, Chipie," said Kate, "you must practice rowing, and make yourself a grand oars-woman, for sometime in September we will get up a regatta, and make a real charming affair of it; and of course you will want to shine."

"You shall have two months, to see how near you can come to equalling Kate, but you'll have to work hard, I warn you, for Kate manages a boat to perfection!" and Grove replaced Chipie's oar, which had slipped from the row-lock.

"Will you give me lessons, Kate!" asked Chipie, splashing the water high in air, in her effort to pull a long stroke.

"Yes, gladly, if you'll promise not to be too energetic," laughed Kate, as she received a heavy spray in her eyes, the result of her cousin's attempt to back water.

"Then, after to-day I'll give you into her charge, but I hope you'll find an apter pupil than you found in Carl, Kate! Do you remember?"

"Indeed I do, poor fellow! How hard I tried to make a sailor of him, in those delightful days in Germany! Oh, those moon-light nights on the Alster! Were n't they rare?"

"That they were!" answered Grove meditatively. "Dear old Carl—I wish he were to be here, this summer! He is a right fine fellow, and as handsome as a picture, too. He would enjoy this life here, immensely, would n't he?"

"Yes," answered Kate. "Why does n't he make that visit to America, which he has been thinking of so long, this year? You ought to impress it upon him that it is his duty not to postpone it any longer."

"My dear sisterine, I've been using my persuasive powers, all winter. There is no reason that I can discover, why the old fellow should n't come, now! but the probability is, he will wait until autumn. Ah! that last stroke was capital, Chipie!"

"Yes," responded Chipie, elatedly, "it is all owing to the freedom this blouse gives me. Girls, I do wish that you too, had them; they would be such a comfort! Oh, what a pretty landing-place!" she added, as they stopped under some low drooping trees.

The path which led from this point to the dell, for which they were bound, wound along the edge of the lake through the thickly shaded wood. It was not strange that Winny grew silent and dreamy during her rambles here, for it was like a veritable fairy-land, with its soft carpet of partridge blossoms, dotted occasionally by brilliant scarlet berries, and the green arches formed by the climbing, and intertwining of

the wild smilax and woodbine over the trees. They followed the path, with subdued exclamations of delight, until a signal from Grove, who was leading the way, told that they were nearing the cathedral. This was a broad, smooth avenue, matted with bright pine needles; on both sides, gigantic hemlocks towered, softened into mysterious mistiness, by the blending of their upper branches with the frosty arms of the pines which loomed above. The air was redolent with the purifying incense wafted through the grand nave from the full censers.

It was no wonder that the voices grew soft, as the God-formed temple was approached, nor that they ceased altogether upon entering! How natural for Grove to bare his head reverently, and for Donald to comprehend at once Kate's look, and also uncover for the benediction! For a few moments, they remained with hushed voices, drinking in the solemn beauty, and then, passed on to the dell, a large opening shut in by great over-arching trees, and luxuriantly spread with a soft covering of green moss.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Madge, half under her breath, sinking down on the emerald couch, and gazing around in ecstacy.

"Do you wonder that we never weary of it!" Kate said, seating herself beside Madge.

"No, indeed," said Chipie, impulsively. "I should

be quite content if I could come here, every Sabbath, for my sermon ; I'm sure it would n't be possible to find any, more inspiring, elsewhere ! ”

“ No. One receives the truth unalloyed, in a spot like this,” said Grove, throwing himself on the deep moss, at Chipie’s feet.

“ Oh, Kate, do you remember the time you remained at Chavenage, all winter, when we came down here, the day after that great snow storm ? ” asked Madge. “ I have laughed over it so many times, and wondered if I should ever be as brave, again.”

“ Yes,” said Kate, “ I shall never forget that wild freak, for we got so much enjoyment out of it ; it was the year after we returned from abroad, when poor aunt Floy was so ill, and we staid out here for the sake of rest and quiet for her. How good it was in you, Madge, to make me that long visit when you hated the country in winter, as you did ! ”

“ But we had a delightful time, in spite of the pokiness of some of our days,” said Madge, reflectively.

“ Yes,” said Kate, “ although I believe that the most exciting event which took place, was our visit to the dell after the three days’ storm ; we wanted to see the dear old place in its winter garb, and after being housed up for three days, we were ready for anything that promised excitement, so without saying a word to anyone, we each took a pair of Grove’s Wellingtons, and

in some way succeeded in ploughing our way down here. And oh, Madge, weren't we repaid for our prowess?"

"Why? What did you see?" asked Grove, lazily, as he breathed the aromatic breezes from the pine branch which Chipie was waving above him.

"Oh, we couldn't make you see it, if we should try," said Kate. "It was so beautiful! These great hemlocks were mantled in soft, spotless robes like the vestal queens of the forest that they were, and every needle on the pines, glistened like a jewel: the floors of the dell and cathedral were like purest Carrara, engraven with a pattern of lace-like delicacy, as far as we could see, by myriads of birds which had stolen a march upon us and had paid their praise-tribute, first. We could almost *hear* the stillness—the only sound being an occasional moan from the frozen lake."

"Those sorrowful sounds always seem to me like the wails of the poor imprisoned fishes," said Winny, dreamily. "They make the lakes and rivers seem like great Bastiles, and the spring when she melts away the ice, is like the valiant Napoleon breaking down the prison bars, and letting in light and freedom."

The childish fancy called forth an amused smile; and so rambling on from one thing to another, the morning wore on. At length, the mossy bed and whisperings from the trees, cast a spell over Donald,

and he fell into a sound sleep : Kate began sketching an old stump half buried in ferns, and Madge became absorbed in her book ; while Winny, not caring for the conversation engrossing Chipie and Grove, sauntered off in search of flowers. Presently Grove's remarks began to lose their flavor, and his responses became vague, and then Morpheus jostled his hat over his eyes ; and Chipie was left to watch Kate's deft manipulations.

"Kate, don't sketch, any longer," she exclaimed soon, in a low tone. "Let us leave these fine knights to their fate, and take a stroll. Madge, if you prefer to read, you can see that the sleepers aren't spirited away ! "

"Very well," replied Madge, too much absorbed to look up.

"Is n't it humiliating, Kate, to find out how dependent one is upon the outward adornment ? Grove never would have dared to commit such an impertinence as to fall asleep while I was in the midst of expounding one of my fine theories, if my dress had been after its usual frivolous mode ;" and placing a straw in uncomfortable relation to Grove's ear, Chipie took her cousin's arm, and they walked away.

They struck into a little fern-grown path, which presently brought them to a small pool, separated by a narrow neck of land, from the lake, and which was surrounded by sedges and a rank growth of aquatic

plants: it was a place where frogs and water-snakes reveled in undisturbed felicity, save upon rare occasions when some wood-thief encroached upon their sacred precincts, attracted thither by blossom or grass. But now, the murky water was robbed of all offensiveness by the burden which it bore upon its surface.

"Oh," cried Kate, as the sight met them, "pond-lilies, actually, and such beauties, too! I never knew them to come so early; they are almost a fortnight before their time."

"And wont the others pale with envy when they behold us as we shall return," said Chipie, springing eagerly forward. "Oh, you waxen wonders, let me seize you and make sure that you are real."

"They do look like spirits about to take flight," said Kate, as she sprang from clump to clump of the thick sedges, pulling in the long stems in quick succession.

They worked away, excitedly, until all within easy reach had been captured, and then, notched sticks were resorted to for aid.

"Be careful!" cried Kate, in alarm, as, clinging with one hand to a bunch of rushes, Chipie bent forward. "You hav n't an idea how treacherous this soil is; Donald had a wretched mishap, here, gathering cardinals, last year."

"Bless you," returned Chipie, carelessly, "do n't imagine that I shall do anything rash! This dress gives me such freedom, that I can afford to be rather more venturesome than yourself. There! I see a royal one just beyond that stump, and have it, I must."

"You will certainly come to grief if you attempt it," said Kate, who was herself in momentary danger of losing her balance. "Do n't risk a melancholy bath, I beg of you. I do n't know what would become of you if you should fall!"

"Give yourself no anxiety," was the cheerful response. "I'm discretion itself; in the twinkling of an eye you will see me the possessor of the prize of the loch."

Without heeding her cousin's appeal, she sprang upon the stump, which suddenly parted, and with a splash she sank into the muddy water; it was hardly three feet in depth, but, as Kate had said, the soil beneath was treacherous. For a moment she floundered about, and then, her feet became so deeply imbedded that she could do nothing but keep an upright position and descend with the slow majesty of the setting sun.

"Oh, Kate, Kate, what shall I do,—what shall I do?" she screamed in horror. "I can't move, an inch, and I'm sinking deeper and deeper, every minute. Kate, *think of something—quick!*"

Kate was hardly less alarmed than her cousin, for a

vision of Chipie, disappearing altogether from sight, flitted before her, filling her with terror; and yet, at every glance towards the tempestuous face, she was ready to shout with laughter. She looked about in despair for some hope of assistance, but in vain; and with some hasty words of encouragement, she started on a run towards the dell, leaving Chipie sobbing hysterically. The latter's head and shoulders were alone visible, while the immense hat had fallen low over her eyes, and one hand, with its stained glove, still grasped the bunch of lilies, which was swung across the right shoulder, and which had been retained in spite of all. The frogs, startled by the sudden invasion, were raising their voices in shrill protestation, and performing flying leaps with an energy that was torture to Chipie's brain.

It was not surprising that the figure pressing rapidly towards the cry of distress, should have stopped transfixed as he came suddenly upon the scene.

A second before, a green snake had glided into the water, at Chipie's very feet, and at this last straw she could contain herself no longer; shutting her eyes she burst into a paroxysm of tears never exceeded in her childhood's stormiest grief. Her voice was capable of wondrous volume, and consequently the first ejaculation which fell from the stranger's lips, was unheeded; not until a second venture was made did the eyes open.

"My poor little girl! This is a sad situation, certainly. But do n't cry—one minute and I will have you safe on dry ground!"

With a pleasant ring in his voice, the stranger began hastily to divest himself of knapsack and gun; but he was arrested by Chipie, who saw in this only fresh mortification.

"No! No! I'm not a little gir-girl! I—I'm twenty-fo-four, and I *prefer* to b-be here! Please go away in-instantly!"

Bitter sobs broke her utterance, and with strap half over his head, the sportsman stood still in mute astonishment. Then rallying his self-possession, he calmly raised his hat, and said, courteously:

"Beg your pardon, but you do not expect me to leave you in this 'Slough of Despond!'"

"Yes, oh yes; you are k-kind, b-b-but I can't have you s-stay another *m-minute!*"

"Indeed, that would be barbarous treatment; you will pardon me for disregarding your request!"—and with quick, resolute movements, he began breaking down a sapling. But again Chipie's voice stopped him.

"Go *now!* Resp-spect my com-mand! Oh! Oh!" and with a fresh outburst she waved the bewildered man away.

"But what will you do without help? If I mistake

not, the nature of this soil will hardly permit you to help yourself."

"My fr-friends will be here di—rectly, and—Oh, quick, quick, go away—they are *co-coming!*"

The voice, unnatural and broken though it was, rang with appeal, and hurrying feet made it obvious that his assistance would be unnecessary, so bowing respectfully, the stranger withdrew, saying earnestly:

"I regret that you place me in so unchivalrous a light, but since it is your wish,—I obey!"

Almost immediately, Grove and Donald tore through the bushes, closely followed by the girls; and the sight which met them, threw Grove into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, in which the others, though they fought bravely to repress themselves, found it impossible not to join.

"Grove Sturgis, if you've any man-hood abo-about you, get me out of this wretched bog at once," Chipie cried, now full of indignation as well as pleading. "I'm forever disgraced, and never let me hear the word, water-lily, again! I detest it with all my heart!"

Aware, for the first time, of her hold upon the innocent blossoms, she flung them from her with as much force as her precarious position would allow. Without being really dangerous, her situation was as bad as it could well be, but the signs of actual pain

in her face and tone, were alone effectual in quenching the mirth of the lookers-on. They went to work vigorously, and soon formed a contrivance by which Grove and Donald together were able to bring Chipie to a firm resting place; but a more deplorable spectacle could not be conjured up, and it took many a baptism in the clear waters of the lake before she was in a condition to enter the boat.

It was essential that Chipie should be gotten home without delay, and as Winny hadn't returned from her flower hunt, Donald offered to stay behind and find her.

When they were seated in the boat, Grove said apologetically :

" You must forgive me, Chipie, for my unseasonable mirth, but it was such an unprecedented accident, you know ! "

" You did seem so diminutive, dear," murmured Madge, reflectively."

" You looked as if you meant to make a clean sweep of the lilies, whatever happened," added Grove, again showing signs of levity.

" That is no reason why he should have mistaken me for a lili-putian," Chipie exclaimed, petulantly, but with one of her natural twinkles.

" *He?* Whom do you mean? What has happened?" were the simultaneous interrogations.

"I will only tell you on one condition," said Chipie, ruefully.

"Anything, only tell us," said Grove, looking askance at the two girls.

"Then promise that you will never lisp a word of it to anyone as long as you live," returned Chipie, looking large-eyed.

"We promise," came the eager response.

"Well," exclaimed Chipie, folding her hands, "I have disgraced myself beyond the power of words to express! A *strange man*,—an impertinent spy,—saw it all, and is probably, at this very moment, regaling some boon companion with a description of the whole scene."

For a moment they all looked at each other, as if petrified; then Grove asked, bending much lower over his oars than was at all needful:

"And why didn't the block-head get you out?"

"Because," was the decisive answer, "I *sent* him away!"

And with glowing cheeks and flashing eyes, she related the encounter.

"Oh, you foolish child!" cried Madge, at the end, feeling that an opportunity had been lost, for a bit of romance. "Who ever could he have been? I should say that he was more like an old time knight than an impertinent spy. If you didn't *wish* his help, you

would have been indignant enough if he had n't offered it!"

"But he should have addressed me in a respectful manner; the idea of his addressing me,—Chipie Margrave,—as 'my poor little girl,' and telling me not to *cry*, in that patronizing tone! Why! it was outrageous!" and Chipie's face grew crimson with vexation.

"Bless your soul!" ejaculated Grove; "do you suppose that the poor fellow could recognize in a little screaming, shouting fury, with all but its mouth hidden under that umbrella of a hat, one of the Belles of Washington, as the *Gazette* had it, last winter!"

"But he had n't a bit of delicacy! If he had, he would have left me the moment I commanded him, for he must have known that every moment he staid, made it more and more ridiculous. It was such mockery too, his taking off his hat in that exaggerated fashion!"

"Ah! he doffed his hat, did he?" questioned Grove. "If he had the grace to perform that act of courtesy, out of respect to so soiled a lady of the lake, the shades of some right noble grandfathers must have hovered above him. Chipie, you must excuse me, but considering that you are a girl of sterling sense and a fine development of brain, you can be, at times, a most unreasonable, illogical specimen of humanity!"

Now," he continued, with a mixture of amusement and seriousness, "be just, and describe this persecuted Sir Launcelot, as he really was—not as you please to consider him."

Chipie didn't reply immediately; she sat listening in grim abstraction to the bubbling of the water in her small boots, as she moved them slowly up and down.

"Chipie are you going to be good-natured and do as I ask?" repeated Grove. "Think how I've just risked my life to save you."

"I was n't in a mood to make a study of the gentleman;" at last came the unhappy response.

"Of course you know how he looked," exclaimed Madge. "Did he have whiskers?"

"Yes," pensively.

"What color were they, dear?" queried Madge encouragingly.

"Brown,—dark brown," still more pensively.

"What style of dress?" put in Grove, with a sly grimace at Kate.

"A shaggy grey suit and soft felt hat," came obediently.

"Was he young and nice?" asked Madge, with increasing interest.

"Between thirty and seventy, I should say, was the ambiguous reply.

Whether Chipie's manner and downcast expression

were the cause of Grove's renewed hilarity the girls were left to conjecture, as drawing in his oars he bent his head upon them and gave himself up to prolonged shouts. He attempted to speak, but failed signally.

"Well! We are waiting!" said Madge, at length rather coldly; her curiosity was aroused and she regarded Grove's interruption as unbecoming at so vital a moment.

"Oh, Jove! it's too much—too much!" he finally gasped. "Do you know, my sweet child, that incorrigible Fate has just introduced to you,—rather informally, it is true—one of the grandest fellows in America. That 'impudent spy,' was Rogers Erskine of Baltimore! Kate, you remember him,—he was at home when you were visiting Miss Minton in Baltimore; you met him?"

"Yes", replied Kate faintly, feeling intense pity for her cousin, who with pale face sat looking at Grove, in silence. "But Grove, what reason have you for thinking that it was he?"

"There can be no doubt about it," replied Grove. "I met him when I was in Boston, last; he had just come up from Maine, and by the way, it was he whom Donald met at Bar Harbor,—the remarkable shot he raved over."

"But how came he in Saxony?" asked Kate.

"Because I told him what good hunting, in a mod-

est way, Saxony boasts, and then my description of the place, with its quiet and bracing air, seemed to attract him ; he wanted just such a spot to recruit in, for a week or two ; and Chipie's portraiture settles the matter."

An April-like atmosphere pervaded the boat, by this time. First an hysterical ripple from one of the girls, and then a sudden outburst from Grove, followed in both cases by an effort at self-control, for the sake of Chipie who sat immovable, giving way, every little while, to quiet weeping intervals. It was so unusual for her to cry, under any circumstances, that the effect produced upon her small audience was far more agitating than had it been Madge, who often indulged in tears, but always in a manner that lent grace to the weakness.

Kate had been for some time critically surveying her cousin, in order to discover if recognition under happier conditions would be probable. She decided not, remembering how kindly the broad hat had screened her eyes ; and the distorted mouth, and tear-stained complexion certainly bore little resemblance to the charm belonging to both ; while the voice raised and broken as it had been, could not be connected with Chipie's natural tones, clear and spirited.

With a feeling of relief she attempted to draw Chipie's thoughts away from the mishap, but it was

useless ; Grove and Madge seemed possessed to harp upon it, and in spite of Chipie's expression of distaste, continued to make Mr. Erskine the theme of conversation.

"Do tell us all about him," persisted Madge, drawing her skirt closer, that it might not be soiled by Chipie's wet dress. "Is he a friend of yours, Grove?"

"No, I regret to say that I can claim him only as an acquaintance. I met him for the first time, about four years ago, in Paris, where I saw enough of him to arouse my admiration, and since then, we've run across each other occasionally. He is considered one of the most brilliant men in his profession, although he is no ladies' man, my little Madge. The chances are that he will prove more agreeable to Chipie than to you ; she, undoubtedly, will like him."

"Never !" cried Chipie, speaking for the first time since the disclosure. "His name alone is detestable to me. I wish never to see him again."

"I fear that your wish is vain," said Grove. "I gave him our address, and asked him to remember us when he came up. I said that we should all be at home,—that we were in for a lively summer, as my sister had some charming cousins visiting her, and—" but Grove's gravity forsook him, and the shore being reached, Chipie, ignoring all help, sprang out and fled towards the house, allowing no one to accompany her.

"How provoking that she could n't have taken advantage of the situation," exclaimed Madge, as her sister's figure vanished. "It might have been made quite affecting, if she had only conducted herself properly, for really, there was something rather *picturesque* in that hat! But that she should have rended the air so unflinchingly—Why! we heard her before we were out of the dell, and Chipie's mouth is such a funny shape when she cries! O, what must that man have thought?"

"I wish that I could have seen his face when he got behind the scene," laughed Grove, "for I'm mistaken if it wasn't worth seeing; he's just the man to appreciate a tableau of that sort."

A few hours after, as Kate and Madge were walking through the orchard, they met Tony hurrying mysteriously towards an open field where a bonfire of brush had been burning, all day; he carried a bundle in his hand, and as he passed, the girls caught sight of a bit of the fatal reform suit and a crushed daisy, as they looked lingeringly out for the last time before their cremation.

"*Poor child!*" ejaculated Kate, looking at Madge.

"Yes; poor child!" repeated Madge, returning the look.

CHAPTER VI.

A few evenings after Chipie's unfortunate accident, the girls were seated in the charming apartment always spoken of as the "Queen-mother's room." It was brilliantly lighted by candles which shed their rays softly from the glittering sconces, bringing out to perfection the mellow coloring of the Persian rug, and tenderly bathing the beautiful face of the Venus Milo, near which Kate was half reclining in an arm-chair, with Major's head resting upon her knee.

Madge formed a cheerful picture, surrounded by bright floss silks and gay bits of velvet which she was deftly converting into griffins, frogs and butterflies, to further adorn the piece of Turkish cloth, already startling, in monstrous creations.

Winny, at one end of the room, was bending intently over "The Ancient Mariner," lost to everything

but Doré's weird illustrations; while Chipie sat at the piano, playing snatches of song, or joining in the fragmentary conversation, as the mood seized her.

"What has happened to have kept Grove away so long, I wonder!" exclaimed Madge, presently. "He said he would be here by half-past seven, at the latest, and now it is after eight!"

"Did he go on horse-back?" asked Kate.

"Yes. I dare say he has forgotten all about his promise, the evening is so lovely! It is too bad in him when he knows that auntie and uncle Malcolm are away. There, girls does n't this scarlet frog look pretty against the écrù? Kate, why do you never make these lovely things? One can do them so quickly, and they add so much to one's room!"

"I? Oh, you know I've never been able to get up any enthusiasm over fancy work! It is very improper, I suppose, not to care for so lady-like a pastime, but there is something irritating to me in the mere thought of devoting so much time and patience to anything of that kind; it is ever so pretty, but I believe that my ardor in that direction was quenched in my infantile days, when I found that the innumerable tidies which I used to crochet for mamma for Christmas gifts, had to be transferred to papa for smoking caps. I never could make them flat, and it is a mystery to me, even now, how it is done."

"What a funny girl you are, Kate!" said Madge, regarding her cousin as if she were an enigma. "It must be because you are an artist, and live so much in the clouds; you don't let yourself down into the frivolities of life, as Chipie would say, enough to find out how very nice they are. You look upon so many of the things which girls usually delight in, as if they amounted to nothing. Why, I could n't survive a week without them. But, of course," she added, as in duty bound, "I am very fond of Nature and Art, also!"

Kate smiled curiously, and stroked Major's silken ears; she made no reply, and Chipie broke the silence by saying, as she turned from the piano:

"Kate, is this really a settled plan? Have you made up your mind to give up society and become an artist, in thorough earnest?"

"Most assuredly I have, Chipie. Why are you so incredulous when you know that it is what I care most for in the world? It has been my dream from a child."

"But society can't spare you; she needs you and will rebel at your desertion. Only those who are neither handsome nor attractive should be possessed of genius; it is an unfair monopoly for the studio to claim everything!"

"Aren't you rather uncharitable to the poor studio, my dear cousin?" asked Kate.

"I'm quite charitable enough! It is too bad to defraud society of any influence which would help to better it,—you were saying so yourself, only a day or two ago! Now, why do you, instead of doing your share towards the reformation, propose shutting yourself up in a studio, giving your time and thought to that, and where only a chosen few may ever gain access to you?"

"Oh, I hav'n't an idea of becoming the recluse which you seem to have in mind. As for the benefit which Kate Sturgis would confer upon society, I doubt if either it, or she, would receive any lasting inspiration for good, were she to continue in it dancing the coming years away as she has much of the last two. Possibly it might result in bringing about a new order of things, but I'm inclined to be sceptical," was the laughing rejoinder.

"Everybody thinks it so strange," said Madge, "that anyone so rich and charming as yourself, should be content to give up society life, with all its enjoyments, for a career; they fancy that it is only a freak which will wear itself out after a while."

Kate was amused at the apparent disfavor with which her decision was regarded, and said merrily:

"Does 'everybody' include the inhabitants of both hemispheres?"

"Do n't be provoking, Kate!"

"I have n't a thought of it, Madge ; only it is laughable—the commotion which a girl causes, if she happens to feel that there *are* pleasures and ambitions extant, quite as desirable and compensatory as the formula which fashionable life offers :—dressing, dancing, calling, gossiping, flirting and—marriage ; the last, considered compulsory, of course !"

"I wish you would n't speak in that superior way, Kate ; it is n't agreeable ;" said Madge, peevishly. "Besides, it is n't fair to denounce the circle in which you were born, and have lived and enjoyed yourself all your life."

"Kate does n't mean to *denounce* it, only *renounce* it," put in Chipie, who had said nothing for some minutes.

"You dear little Madge, I'm not thinking of calumniating society ! I'm not a radical, nor do I meditate taking the veil at present. I have n't a doubt that you will not often see me breaking cake at a quiet kettle-drum ; or who knows that I shall not occasionally, say, once a year, indulge in some more extravagant form of gaiety ! So *do* give that velvet griffin a more cheerful expression ; he looks now, as if I had been the means of casting a blight upon his existence."

"Chipie, isn't Kate annoying, this evening ? Why don't you scold her ?".

"Because," answered Chipie, resolutely, as she got

up and seated herself near Kate, "I think that she is grand! The real truth is, Kate, I admire you, both for your views and your determination, and I wish with all my heart that I had some talent to increase, which would serve as an excuse for deserting my present ranks. I would gladly follow your example, for I'm tired and sick of living in a perpetual whirl, frittering two-thirds, and more, of my time away in folly and nonsense—making neither myself nor anyone else one whit the better for my trouble. But alas! I see no way out of it! Yes, Kate, you are a royal girl to waive opposition and criticism, and mark out your life as your heart dictates. You deserve credit for your independence."

"Oh, don't praise me for choosing my own pleasure! No effort was required, I assure you. The only occasion for bravery would be, were I obliged to give up what I most value, and go on living in conventional fetters. Do you know, if our family pedigree did n't disprove it, I should think that the lawless spirit of a gypsy ancestry had been passed down to me. But I suppose it is natural perverseness—my dislike for being controlled by trifling rules and whims! I want some aim in life, and perfect freedom in pursuing it. After all, life is n't long, and there are so many—so very many splendid things in which to interest one's self to some purpose, that I have n't time enough to waste it recklessly, any more."

"I have in mind a number of our friends who are neither frivolous nor thoughtless, although they are fashionables!" remarked Madge, loftily.

"I'm sure you have; we all have!" cried Kate, warmly. "Because it doesn't happen to be the life that appeals to me individually,—that is neither satisfactory nor inspiring to me,—it is no reason why my friend should n't flourish most nobly in it. Some people, I've no doubt, require just that existence for development; but I'm not one of them, that is all. *Comprenez-vous, ma petite?*"

"Ye-s," responded Madge, doubtfully.

"I agree with you, Kate," said Chipie, "that one ought to choose the life, if one is able, which promises the broadest field for expansion. But we can't always do this, you know. Frankly, my dear girl, I'm dejected, though you may not imagine it, and have been so for months, because of the little which I've accomplished since leaving school. The only thing of importance,—Kate, I have a mind to make you a confession," she broke off, abruptly.

"Do; I'm sure 't will be interesting."

"But it is *sub rosâ!* You must promise to be faithful: no one knows it, except Madge!"

Kate snatched a rose branch from a jar which stood near and waved it overhead. "Confess!" she said.

"Well," responded Chipie, "it was n't *all* a joke,

my nonsensical talk, the other night, about my literary ambitions. In a certain drawer in my writing-desk, repose an immense package of manuscript paper; a fine array of patent pens; an exquisite rose-colored satin pen-wiper which Madge bought at a fair, and sundry other articles of inspiration. I often open that drawer, and think how nice it would be if I had time and quiet at my command. Does this give you encouragement for the future?"

"Oh, Chipie, you are writing a book; I knew it—I knew it! I've been suspecting it for ever so long, and your satirical remarks have n't deceived me in the least. Mamma and I have talked you over so many times, and said, again and again, that you would surprise us some day by presenting us with a grand novel, with 'Compliments of the Author,' written on the fly-leaf. Now, what is it about?"

Here the earnest girl talk was interrupted by the sound of horses' hoofs on the drive-way, and crossing the room, Kate drew aside the curtain and looked out.

"It is Grove, I suppose. But some one is with him; did Donald go, too, Madge?"

"No, it can't be he, for he was in his room mending his fishing rod, long after Grove left the house."

The horsemen now appeared from behind the trees, and by the light of the moon, Kate recognized Grove and Mr. Erskine. She turned quickly from the win-

dow, and glanced with an expression of amusement and anxiety towards the unconscious Chipie, who had re-seated herself at the piano, with an air of abstraction, her thoughts intent on the subject just dropped ; she had absently taken up a sheet of music, and when Kate advanced slowly towards her, she was vacantly reiterating : " Love may come to-morrow, but I'll be free to-day."

Kate was in doubt whether to prepare her for the meeting or not ; but she finally decided that she would, and stepping behind her, she said calmly :

" Chipie you look charming, this evening. I'm so proud of you ! But now we are to have an interruption to our wise talk.—Grove is bringing in a caller."

" Whom ?" was the indifferent interrogation.

" Mr. Erskine."

" What !" cried Chipie, rising excitedly and turning pale. " That man ! I shall go to my room, this minute !"

" Chipie, you must—"

" No, no, Kate, do n't urge me to remain, I will not meet him ! I will not humiliate myself by allowing an opportunity for recognition."

" But, dear child, you will be sure to meet him in some way ! He may be in town a week or two longer, and if he is, you can't escape him. Come

dear, have it over at once, and be your own witty, vivacious self. The keenest detective in the world would never discover a line about you, this evening, to tell the tale of woe. Recognition is impossible! Look for yourself."

Kate drew the hesitating figure towards the long mirror. Chipie's first glance was rebellious, but her expression gradually changed into comparative serenity, as she realized how little occasion there was for apprehension.

Certainly no resemblance could be traced between the damp heroine of the pool, and the piquant brunette, with her dark hair drawn in graceful waves into a low Sappho, and kept in place by a golden comb; her dress of black, lacy material, fell in clinging folds of drapery about her, and was relieved from any hint of sombreness by an airy spray of scarlet blossom at her throat.

"There, charmer, you won't persist in hiding the light of your countenance from us, after that flattering response!"

"Of course I can do nothing but succumb now, for 't is too late to retreat; I hear them coming; but remember, if I am betrayed, you shall bear the penalty."

Clasping her hands in half dread, half jest, she sat down under the full light of a blazing sconce, and prepared to meet her trial like a Spartan. She had ac-

cepted the position, and she would permit no craven promptings to lure her into a shadowy corner ;—under the direct light of a dozen candles she would await her fate.

With eyes snapping with suppressed glee, Grove entered the room, followed by Mr. Erskine ; and advancing towards his sister, said heartily :

“ Kate, you will be glad to meet an old acquaintance ! Mr. Erskine, whom I’ve had the happy fortune to meet, this evening.”

Kate stepped forward in her bright, unaffected way, and extending her hand cordially, said ;

“ This is a very great pleasure, Mr. Erskine ! My brother told us that you were planning to visit this rural region, and we’ve been hoping to welcome you to our retreat.”

With a courtly bow, not unlike the bow which Chipie had received a few days previously, Kate’s greeting was returned, and then followed introductions.

Madge was charming, as a matter of course ; and Chipie was radiant. There was a suggestion of haughtiness as she inclined her head, but the beautiful eyes glowed and the teeth flashed, lending such animation to her face, that Grove could not repress the exclamation to Kate ;

“ Jove ! isn’t she immense, to-night ? ”

“ And what happy chance brought about this meet-

ing?" asked Kate with interest. "Were you on your way to Chavenage, Mr. Erskine, when my brother met you?"

"No, Miss Sturgis, I'm entirely indebted to good fortune for this pleasure; I hadn't anticipated it for some days to come, not knowing that you were a near neighbor. Your brother spoke of Chavenage as being in Wilmington, and I wasn't aware until an hour ago that Saxony is included in the township. I inquired the distance to Wilmington Centre, this morning, and was told that it was twelve miles, north."

"Your guide was certainly a stranger to this vicinity," answered Kate, smiling; "Wilmington Centre is exactly two miles west of Saxony."

"It was such a fortunate chance that led me to take the old ridge road, back," said Grove. "It was there by the red bridge that I found Mr. Erskine enjoying Chipie's favorite view of the river. My cousin considers that, one of the prettiest points in Saxony, Mr. Erskine."

"Indeed! I'm glad to know that I had a right to all the pleasure that it gave me," said Mr. Erskine bowing to Chipie, "for I had begun to be suspicious of the moon: I think that Saxony must be rich in beauty, judging from all that I have seen during the few days that I have been here."

"Are you camping, Mr. Erskine?" asked Madge.

"No ; I found that it was n't as much of a wilderness as I had anticipated from your cousin's report ; so I am established in a pretty little cottage, with an untamed colt at my service, where I mean to spend a fortnight or so in purely pastoral enjoyment and rest. I am a near neighbor, Mr. Sturgis tells me ; less than a mile, I think you said, Mr. Sturgis?"

"Yes," said Grove, "It is that pretty, wild looking little cottage, Kate, where old Mrs. Leman and her young grandson live, just the other side of the Winthrops."

"The place where there is a flower-garden which is my ideal of what a flower-garden should be," said Kate, smiling. "The seeds are sown broadcast and are allowed to have their own way in everything ; the only care that is bestowed upon them is that of keeping them free from weeds. I enjoy that tangle of color more than any other garden in town."

"Miss Sturgis you have a beautiful home among the hills and lakes," said Mr. Erskine. "It was like an enchanted place, as we entered the avenue,—the moonlight and quiet were perfect. I could not help contrasting it with the scene of our last meeting, in Baltimore."

"At my friend Dolly's reception!" said Kate ; and then they became engrossed in conversation, leaving Madge, who had re-commenced her velvet creations,

an opportunity for taking an inventory of her vis-a-vis. He was above medium height; finely proportioned, and now, as he sat with head thrown back and face lighted with interest, Madge did not hesitate to cede him her approval.

"His eyes are remarkable," she mused; "Chipie must admit that, notwithstanding her prejudice; they are the large grey eyes that she admires so much.

Then the nose and mouth were critically examined, as she endowed a katy-did with Albino eyes; they were both finely cut, she saw, and possessed a slight expression of hauteur, which found favor; while the teeth were as dazzling as Chipie's own.

In the midst of her contemplations, Donald came in, his face flushed with expectation. He had recognized the voice, and with boyish demonstrations of pleasure, he seized Mr. Erskine's outstretched hand.

"So these were the attractions, my little man, which drew you away from our fishing haunts! I now understand the willingness with which you left your P. P. C. for those trout!"

"But, Mr. Erskine, it's all Greek to me,—did you know Grove or the girls? You didn't say anything about them!"

"And you were equally uncommunicative, young man! You gave me no opportunity for 'saying anything,' or I certainly should have improved it."

The re-union put Donald into high spirits, and during the explanations which followed, Mr. and Mrs. Sturgis, having returned from a call, came in, and the conversation became general. The time flew by pleasantly, and nobody thought of its being late until the great hall clock struck eleven. Mr. Erskine arose with a slight exclamation of surprise, and prepared to say—‘Good-Night.’

“That presumptuous clock, Mr. Erskine, is the only time reminder whieh we have at Chavenage,” remarked Mrs. Sturgis, smilingly. “We do n’t approve of it in the least, and are thinking seriously of prohibiting its interference, by violent means.”

“Indeed, I beg of you, do not do that,—if only for the reputation of your callers,” was the courteous reply; and with a final “Good-Night,” and a cordial assurance that Chavenage welcomed its friends at all times, from his hostess, Mr. Erskine mounted the dancing colt which Cæsar had brought up, and wended his way as slowly as the antic animal would permit, towards his new home.

It required considerable exertion to keep the untamed creature in hand, and by the time that he reached his quaint little bed-room, with its chintz hangings, sleep was for a time quite out of the question. Accordingly he drew out the prim hour-glass table which, in a feeble way, graced one side of the

room, and began a letter to his only sister, Mrs. Burlingame, part of which ran thus :

" I cannot give you as glowing a report of my fishing success, as when I wrote you from Maine ; but doubtless you consider that I wore the subject threadbare at that time, and are willing to forego further eloquence in the same direction. The country in this region is pretty, and new to me ; the air is bracing and the quiet is what I particularly crave ; so I shall remain in my present comfortable nest for a week or two, and see what rest will do for me.

I spend my days roving the woods like an Indian, and—but that reminds me, Caroline, of an incident that occurred the morning of my arrival here, and which, you will agree, is worth mention. Foraging after game, my attention was suddenly attracted by cries of distress, and following in their direction I presently came upon a sight which for pure comicality was never surpassed by Cruikshank himself. In the middle of a small duck pond, surrounded by rank vegetation, I despaired a figure, or rather, a head, a pair of shoulders and two hands, one grasping the branch of an overhanging tree and the other clutching a tremendous bunch of pond-lilies. The expression of the face, or I should say the *mouth*, as that was all that was visible from under the odd affair which adorned the head, was indescribable. I essayed to

question the apparition, but my first venture was drowned by the cries and wails which issued from the triangular feature before me. As I gazed, stupefied for a moment, I confess, the atmosphere grew dark with frogs of every size and hue, which leaped and splashed about their charmer, mingling their croaks in horrible discord. Was it a witch conjuring up ingredients for her favorite broth, I asked myself! But a minute's reflection dissipated the idea, and convinced me that the little tempest could only be a child of ten or a dozen years; as such, I addressed her, as I hastened to—"

Here the scene came so vividly before the writer, that he threw down his pen, and laughed as long and as loud as he dared, remembering the hour and the dimensions of the cottage. Presently the pen was resumed, and for some time continued to move rapidly, while the eyes following it flashed suggestively; finally it stopped, and turning to the opening page, Mr. Erskine ran his eye over it, and then added, before annexing his signature:—

"I seem to be in for surprises of one kind or another! This evening I ran across an old acquaintance—Sturgis, by name,—accepted his invitation to accompany him home, and by so doing, found myself in the midst of one of the most charming family circles I have ever met. I became somewhat interested

in a Miss Margrave, a niece of Mrs. Sturgis, because of a resemblance about the mouth and chin to yourself, my dear sister; but there the likeness ceased, and I am not sure that further ken would prove the haughty young beauty wholly agreeable.

But, Zounds! My letter is become an old-time novel in point of loquacity. So, sparing you further affliction,

I am, affectionately,

Your devoted brother,

Rogers R. Erskine.

CHAPTER VII.

NEARLY a fortnight had passed since Mr. Erskine's introduction to Chavenage, and during that time, his frequent visits had served to establish him on a pleasant and familiar footing with all its inmates, save Chipie, who ignored the encomiums which the different members of the family were pleased to shower upon him, and refused, generally, to speak of him in any terms.

As she was sure, by this time, that her secret was unknown to Mr. Erskine, there seemed no reason why she should keep up her feeling of animosity; but she could not forgive him the bitter humiliation which he had innocently caused her, nor did she try, but went on cherishing her indignation and annoyance in a

manner quite foreign to her forgiving nature. As much as common courtesy would permit, she avoided contact with him, telling herself that "a barrier had been thrown up which excluded everything but the barest civility."

And this was the state of affairs, when Grove, in company with Mr. Erskine, approached the archery-field, where the girls were having an exciting contest, and exclaimed breezily :

"Girls, 't is a glorious day for pic-nicing ! What do you say to starting at once, for Mt. Norcott, and making a day of it ? It is n't ten o'clock yet, and we can easily get off in half.an hour !

The proposal was received with pleasure by one and all, and Grove, after holding a brief consultation with Kate, went to the stables to order the carriages, leaving her to superintend the lunch preparations.

Quick hands and many soon got everything in readiness. Mr. Erskine took charge of the phæton, which was to carry Mrs. Sturgis, Kate and Madge, while Grove and Chipie, with the two children, took possession of the somewhat antiquated, though still highly respectable vehicle which, in its day, had been treated with great deference and called by a high-sounding name, but which had since degenerated into the "ark"; however, the contumely of the appellation was due to no lack of dignity in its possessor. Its

capacity for stowing away people and luggage was marvellous, for when hampers, baskets, books and wraps, to say nothing of the small children, were packed into its dim recesses, it retained outwardly an air of stateliness, good to behold. But it was only upon occasions like the present that its worth was allowed to exhibit itself.

"I'm sure, it is a baronial looking establishment," said Chipie, as Grove touched up the sleek greys, and took the lead. It is a shame to keep it poked away, as you do ; you have n't another carriage with springs like these, and I shall certainly patronize it a great deal, this summer."

Mt. Norcott was a pretty elevation, situated seven or eight miles from Saxony. It had the honor of being registered in the Massachusetts Gazetteer as Mt. Norcott, and as it was the only approach to a mountain in the vicinity, it was regarded with deep respect by the inhabitants of the surrounding towns. The steep, winding road leading up one side, was so shut in on both sides by trees, that until more than half way up, nothing could be seen but a mass of living green. The road finally opened upon a rocky hill-side, thinly scattered by gnarled oaks and chestnuts ; and at this point, as the carriages could go no farther, the horses were taken out, and the remainder of the ascent made on foot. The circuitous foot-path was rugged and

overgrown with bushes, but all the way, after leaving the open hill, the view became prettier and wilder.

Kate was in her element up amongst the clouds and breezes, and sped on without waiting for the others ; a sudden bend in the path brought her into sight as she stood upon an overhanging rock, her lithe figure outlined against the sky, revelling in the beauty around her ; with one hand grasping her staff, 'the other held high above her head, she sent forth in a clear voice, the jodël. She waited for the echo to die away, and then exclaimed, as the others approached :

" Oh, how can you walk so slowly ? I want Mr. Erskine to get the view from just this point, for it is the most satisfying on the mountain. There ! is n't it worth the climb and the briars, and aren't Monadnoc and Wachusett lovely in the distance ? "

" Sisterine, are n't you, as usual, rather extravagant in your admiration of this mound ? " asked Grove, with aggravating mildness ; and then he added : " I believe that Kate began this worship in her cradle, didn't she, motherdy ? "

" Yes," said Mrs. Sturgis, with a smile, " she was hardly more than out of it when she conceived the idea that it was *Mont Blanc*. Her first words in the morning were always, ' Dod bess dee Mong Bang.' It never occurred to me that it was other than a fancy which had caused her to adopt the name. Her primer

having told her that Mt. Blanc was the largest mountain in the world, and Saxony being the world to her little mind, the mistake was natural enough; but oh, what a pitiable little face confronted me when at the age of seven, the child beheld the genuine Mont Blanc! In a passion of tears she flew into my arms, crying, 'Oh, mamma, mamma, it is n't fair—it is n't fair to my own mountain at home! I called it Mong Bang, and God thought I meant this, and he has been making it big and mighty because I prayed Him to, and all the time it was my poor darling at Saxony that I meant!'"

"My sister's face was a study when she came home three years later, and took a survey of our ant-hill" added Grove, with grave amusement. "Since then she has treated it with so much consideration, that I imagine she has never been able to entirely divest herself of the belief that her blunder prevented a white-capped, towering wonder from casting its shadow over Chavengage."

Mr. Erskine seemed affected by the anecdote, and as soon as the hill-top was gained, he sought Kate, and together they enjoyed the wide-spread beauty. They had become admirable friends during the two weeks, and now, as they stood apart, engaged in earnest conversation, a thought came suddenly to Chipie, and she cried to herself, in dismay. "Oh, if they should—if they should, and I should be obliged to like Mr. Erskine for Kate's sake!"

The idea was anything but agreeable, and more than ever Chipie felt that this man's advent into the summer life was a calamity. At the same time, her curiosity was awakened; could it be that Mr. Erskine possessed power to attract Kate—Kate, whose ideas of what a gentleman should be, were so exalted! With a new feeling of interest, her eyes wandered towards the two figures, and rested there thoughtfully. She could not see their faces, but suddenly, in the midst of what seemed to be a very engrossing subject, Kate turned and made a laughing motion towards herself, and almost directly Mr. Erskine advanced towards where she was sitting perched on a rock; she was annoyed, but she sat calmly and waited for the opening remark which came with the usual courteousness.

"Miss Margrave, your cousin tells me that you are a famous botanist. Will you help me, please, to name this staunch little flower? I found it blooming all by itself, under that old chestnut, yonder."

"Did my cousin refuse to aid you?" asked Chipie, with a little laugh, as if anticipating the reply.

"Absolutely declined," said Mr. Erskine, "Miss Sturgis thinks it a heinous crime to pry into the secrets of the Posy family; then you do not sympathize with her?"

"No," said Chipie, with a defiant little gesture, "I enjoy probing the hearts of the defenceless things. I

do not understand my cousin's sentiment regarding them ; she thinks it desecration to analyze a flower, believing that it takes away the mystery ; it does not please her to find how little space there is for her beloved fairy-folk. Why, Mr. Erskine, I called down Kate's undying scorn, when we were children, by begging one of her closed gentians for dissection,—for even at that early period my savage instincts were developed. You know the legend of the flower ? ”

“ No ; will you tell it me ? ” asked Mr. Erskine.

“ Once upon a time,” began Chipie with a smile, “ a fairy-queen was wandering through a forest, and becoming thirsty, she cast about for relief, which she suddenly espied in a group of blue gentian cups filled with dew ; approaching, she bent to quench her thirst, but each cup, in turn, refused to part with its dew-drop ; whereupon the fairy smote the flowers, and cursing their kind forever, forbade them to open, more. Perhaps you are aware that in consequence of that sad hour, blindness has been their doom ! ”

“ I am not familiar with the flower,” said Mr. Erskine, with a smile ; “ but their interesting history makes me curious to meet it. Then your cousin feels that they deserve consideration, notwithstanding their exhibition of selfishness ? ”

“ Yes, she thinks that the sin has been expiated by the years of suffering shut up within themselves. Kate is

far more merciful than I ;—I have n't a particle of respect for the selfish little things, and I take real comfort in picking them to pieces, whenever I find them."

Chipie spoke vindictively ; she was quite willing to impress her companion as unlovely.

A quizzical expression swept across Mr. Erskine's face, as he began, after a brief pause :

" Miss Margrave, do you know that you remind me—"

" Mr. Erskine," called Kate, from below, " we need help ; will you and Chipie come here a moment ! "

Mr. Erskine assisted Chipie from her pinnacle, and the remark which suggested something of interest, it being always interesting to hear of one's self, was left unfinished. Chipie was a little provoked at the untimely interruption, and was very much piqued, also, at finding herself recurring, again and again, to the uncompleted sentence ; of what, or of whom had she reminded Mr. Erskine ? Why could n't Kate have waited a few minutes longer, before calling ?

When she joined the circle gathered about the hamper, busily engaged in emptying it of its tempting contents, she was seized with a desire to give her cousin a sly pinch, but instead, she took one end of the snowy cloth and helped to spread it under a large nut tree on the highest point of the hill.

"Donald should receive a vote of thanks for suggesting the feast, at once," said Chipie, as she took the glasses which Grove held out towards her. "I feel that a sandwich is the one thing on earth, at this moment, capable of making me quite happy ;—unromantic concession, I confess."

"Then I have a privilege which I never dared hope to command," said Mr. Erskine, promptly, as he took a plate of delicate sandwiches, from Kate's hand, and offered them to Chipie.

"Oh, but it cannot be your privilege ! Honor forbids ! It is n't fair, as we children used to say, for one to begin before all are ready !" and Chipie set the plate in its place, with a droll smile, while Mr. Erskine, at Grove's request, began deftly to help building a fireplace. His camping out experiences had evidently been of practical benefit to him, and his skill in all the little matters pertaining to impromptu spreads, and the necessary culinary arrangements, won him fresh laurels. In a wonderfully short space of time, a fire was roaring in an imposing fireplace ; the coffee was sending out its delicious aroma, and a general air of thriftiness and good cheer pervaded the spot which Grove and Mr. Erskine declared their special territory ; and the ladies were requested not to encroach, but to look on, from a cooler position higher up, and bestow counsel, or commendation, as called

for. They were all ready enough to accede, except Kate, who, ignoring the opposing voices of the gentlemen, and unable to resist the temptation of the crackling gypsey fire, marched laughingly into forbidden ground, with a pail and a basket of bananas, declaring her intention of presenting to the company an ambrosial dish. She forthwith began cutting her bananas into thin slices, but her efforts were n't crowned with the success she had hoped for, and after some narrow escapes from conflagration, she retired without her boasted addition to the banquet. But her exertions were n't allowed to die unsung; when, in oriental fashion, the company drew around the festal cloth, the central dish attracted all eyes. Kate had last seen those black, shrivelled up cinders behind a bush, where she had hustled them from sight, but now, thanks to Grove, they lay nestled in oak leaves, and the card suspended above, suggested their origin,—
“Chef d’œuvre de l’artiste.”

CHAPTER VIII.

IT is doubtful if the old trees, stretching their princely canopies so ungrudgingly over the pleasure-seekers as they sat at lunch, had ever listened to conversation more replete with mirth and wit. Everybody was happy, and nobody tried to hide it. Even Chipie was so far affected by the social atmosphere, that she listened and responded to Mr. Erskine with more of frank friendliness than she had at any other time exhibited; and after lunch, Grove and Madge, who had been wonderingly noting this new state of affairs, and communicating their wonder to each other by the skilful management of their brows, were further amazed upon seeing the two, whom they had begun to regard as antipathetic spirits, saunter away by them-

selves, in earnest conversation, in as natural and unconstrained a fashion as if they had been in the habit of sauntering away by themselves every day since their acquaintance.

How far the afternoon's ramble was efficacious in subduing Chipie's bitterness towards Mr. Erskine, no one knew, as she vouchsafed no information upon the subject, but the calumet of peace was hinted at in her merry face, as she seated herself beside Mrs. Sturgis, at the close of the day, when all were gathered on the hill-top, for the crowning pleasure,—the sunset.

“Kate, if you have your folio, why don't you sketch that old tree, for the panel you are painting for motherdy? Isn't it what you want?” asked Grove.

“The very thing,” Kate exclaimed. “O, why didn't I think of it sooner? But,” she added, looking at her watch, “there is time now; will you go down to the carriage with me, Madge! I forgot to bring my folio up.”

“Let me get it for you,” said Grove, rising.

“No, thank you,” answered Kate, “no one could find it but myself; I've stowed it away in a corner sacred to it alone,” and without waiting the two girls hastened off.

“If you will carry my things, Madge, I'll take some wraps to mamma and the girls; they will be glad of them, I'm sure,” and approaching the carriage, Kate

got in. Madge was preparing to follow, when Kate called, in a muffled voice from the back seat, where she was hunting for her wraps:

"Is the carriage braced? I did 'nt think to look, and if it isn't, we must not move about much." But Madge had already stepped up, and with difficulty swung herself into her seat. The inclination of the ground had made the step awkwardly high, and without thinking of the consequences, she had supported herself upon a spoke of the forward wheel, which, sure enough, had not been braced. Hardly had her foot left the spoke, when with a swerve the ark began to move slowly forward. Madge did n't realize the danger, immediately; and Kate, occupied in her search, noticed nothing until an alarmed cry from her cousin caused her to spring up. A glance revealed the danger:—shafts foremost, and with speed increasing, the heavy vehicle was bearing down the rocky hill in a direct line with the tree to which Brutus was fastened. With a frantic gesture, Kate leaned out, and cried:

"Back, Brutus! Back, back!"

Urged on by the voice, the horse who stood, with dilating nostrils, tearing up the earth in terror at the on-coming danger, broke from his halter, and galloped away with a succession of shrill neighs. At the same instant, collision with a tree-stump changed the direction of the carriage, but it was only escaping

Charybdis to meet with Scylla ; the steep hill lay before, and the ark now moving at great speed, could but hurl its helpless occupants against the side of the giant rock which loomed up at the foot.

Madge attempted to leap, but Kate held her back ; the sharp rocks covering the hillside would have made a jump fatal ; death was inevitable, Kate believed, but why plunge into it of one's own accord ! A calm fell over her, for a moment ; then grasping Madge's cold hand, which clutched the back of the seat, she cried :

" Oh, Madge, forgive me ! It is *my* fault,—*I brought you here !*"

Crash !—

The shafts had struck a rock, the sudden percussion breaking them off close to the axletree ; the carriage was thrown forward,—a shattered mass.

Madge was precipitated some distance on one side, while Kate lay, face downward, under the ruins.

The body of the carriage had been turned completely over, thus breaking the weight which would otherwise have fallen upon Kate. As it was, the fall had stunned both, and they lay unconscious. When Kate opened her eyes, the first thing of which she was sensible, was Major's tongue performing a work of mercy upon her forehead. She could move neither hands nor feet, so firmly was she pinned to the ground by the débris ; but at a shocked exclam-

mation of "Good God, are you killed!" she turned her head, and discovered a young man in knicker-bockers, rushing breathlessly towards Madge, who had also come to life, and was slowly rising. A minute after, a second voice, ejaculated, in a broad, nasal twang :

"By Gosh! Ef this ere aint a spill, I never see one in my life! Did n't quite jump the bucket, though, didg-yer?" and kind, strong hands began pulling away the doors, windows, baskets and cushions from poor Kate's back. The latter, from her humble position, gazed up to Madge, and the tableau which met her eyes was so irresistibly ludicrous, that she could n't restrain a spasm of laughter, although she was shocked at herself for it, remembering from what they had just escaped. But, fortunately, her mirth was mistaken for weeping, by the young countryman.

Madge had been thrown out with such violence that she had, as Kate afterwards remarked, "literally bitten the dust," and the clayey loam upon which she had fallen, had made a kindly target for her head; while, worse than all, the preserved blackberries, left in the carriage, through forgetfulness, shared in the accident, and Madge's sensitive nose had secured one of them as a soothing balm. There she stood like a high tragedy queen, her dress torn from the binding, and floating in an imposing train far behind, while

her hair, loosened from its place, swept in ripples below her waist.

The knight of the knickerbockers was far more excited, apparently, than either of the girls, and his first act of chivalry was to pick up Madge's comb,—the pretty shell comb which Grove had brought her from Europe,—and holding it by the one remaining tooth, which, singularly, was the middle one, he passed it to Madge, with a formal bow. It was accepted with perfect composure, and the short upper lip, which a minute before had been curled with pain and wounded pride, wreathed itself into a gracious smile, which would have been captivating, had not the clay besmeared countenance and rubicund nose, given such an antiquated and *bizarre* expression.

As soon as she could she retired behind a tree, and peeped out miserably from between the branches, watching Kate as she crawled out inch by inch, as one article after another was taken away.

When she was finally released, Kate stood up and looked about her. The young men were trying to get the body of the carriage over, but at the sound of Kate's voice, they came forward to hear what she had to say, and on learning the whereabouts of the rest of the party, offered to acquaint them, at once, of the accident; the offer was only too gladly accepted, for the bruised limbs of both girls cried out against mak-

ing the ascent. When they were left to themselves, they sank upon the ground, and stared at each other dubiously. Madge began to cry softly, while Kate nervously laughed and tried to be consoling.

"Madge, are you very much hurt?"

"My feelings are," sniffed Madge, "otherwise I'm only cracked and disreputable looking. But how ever did you get out alive? It did look so dreadful to see you buried up under that horrid great thing, and when you were crawling out, you looked just as if you were being turned out of a wringing machine."

"It felt about as comfortable," moaned Kate, with a comical face, as a sharp pain in her left arm reminded her of the heavy door which she had been supporting. "But, then, I'm so thankful to *be*, at all, that I'm ready to regard the knocks and bumps as real blessings. Oh, Madge, look!" she continued with a shudder. "We are n't ten yards from the 'Giant Rock!' Think of it! Oh, think from what we have been saved!"

"I do n't want to think of it, Kate; it is too ghastly. I could almost feel my hair turning white, just before the crash came," replied Madge, trembling.

It certainly was of no use dwelling upon the fate from which they had been snatched, and observing Madge's pale lips, Kate got up with as much sprightliness as her bones would permit, saying cheerfully:

"Well, Madgie dear, here we are safe and whole, and as a penance we are obliged to return to the vanity of our toilets; so let us go to the spring and make ourselves a little less ridiculous before anyone else sees us."

"I do n't understand how I happen to look so much worse than you," said Madge, gathering up her dress, and following her cousin. "The front of your overskirt is gone, but otherwise you do n't look very bad, and here I am covered with this horrid yellow dirt, from my boots to the crown of my head; it is in my eyes, and I actually feel it grit under my teeth. What am I to do to make myself fit to go home?"

"Brush the worst of it off, and you may have my linen duster; that will hide everything, you know."

"But you will want it yourself," said Madge, brightening.

"No; my overskirt is the only serious damage, and I can easily arrange that," Kate answered, as she stooped to bathe her face.

"Did I look very outrageous, Kate?" queried Madge, presently, as she knelt by the edge of the stream. But she needed no verbal answer, her reflection being sufficient. When her first shock of mortification was over, and she had finished arranging her hair, she said, with her usual self-complacency:

"Kate, I have one thought to comfort me: I trust

that I acquitted myself with ease and self-possession, and a gentleman will always recognize a lady in whatever situation he may find her!"

"Was that the reason Mr. Erskine treated Chipie with such deference upon a certain occasion?" laughed Kate.

Madge was too deeply occupied in her thoughts to respond, but presently she exclaimed :

"How splendidly that young man did bear himself, and how sympathetic he seemed!" I wonder who he can be! Did you notice those Knickerbockers, Kate? I think they are ever so nice; and weren't they good not to smile, when we must have looked so funny?"

"Do Knickerbockers ever smile,—or were you speaking of our rescuers?" asked Kate, soberly, as she observed Madge's absorbed manner. "But hurry, dear; just put a pin in that plaiting, for here they all come at the top of their speed, Grove and Mr. Erskine leading."

A minute after, frightened and out of breath, the party came up. Mrs. Sturgis could only catch the girls in her arms and murmur,

"My children, you are safe!"

Of course, they became heroines, at once, and were questioned, rebuked, kissed, hugged and praised,—although no one knew why they were praised, only it was an outlet for the overflowing gladness.

Madge was thinking that, after all, it was rather a nice thing to have happened, as it had given an opportunity for her power of elegant self-control to display itself, when Mrs. Sturgis approached, and introduced her knight,—Mr. Godfrey, Jerrold Winthrop's friend.

A clear, straightforward pair of eyes met Madge's. The fresh, well-formed face would have been very boyish in its rounded contour, had not a dark moustache, incipient though it was, imparted manliness to it; it was a face that denoted much strength of character, but so far, thanks to Dame Fortune, no special demand had been made upon the latent energy.

Madge's self-possession had evidently elicited his admiration, which did n't diminish at all, upon seeing her without the party-colored mask.

It was insisted that the unfortunate girls should remain quietly by the brook, until the confusion of packing up the scattered goods and chattels into portable compass, should be over.

"But where were you, Mr. Godfrey, when you first saw us?" asked Madge. "We did n't see a sign of anyone when we got into the carriage."

"No; it all happened rather curiously," was the reply. "About an hour ago, my friend Winthrop and myself, were crossing just above, when we came upon your carriages. Winthrop thought he recog-

nized the close one, and as we went along he began telling me of your home in Saxony, Miss Sturgis. He became so eloquent on the subject, and I so interested, that until we had gotten a mile into the woods, we forgot that we were there for the purpose of tracking a pair of foxes which we had caught sight of, this morning. Then I missed my large revolver, and went back to look for it, for I knew I had it when we entered the woods; I found it where I had dropped it, in jumping a wall, and was just turning in, again, when I heard a loud neighing as if there were trouble in the camp; so I ran to the brow of the hill, and got there just in time to see the horse break away, and the carriage making for that beastly rock."

"Could you see us?" asked Kate.

"No, I wasn't sure that anyone was in it, at first—I did n't know why there should be—but afterwards I thought that I heard voices; then came the smash!"

"Did you think that we were killed?" asked Madge, softly.

"I never was so frightened in my life," was the simple answer, "as I was when I saw Miss Margrave fly out! I did n't see you, Miss Sturgis, until I got in front of the ruins."

"I'm so glad that you happened to be here," said Madge, prettily. "I do n't know what we should have done without you, for I never could have walked up that hill; could you, Kate?"

"Judging from the difficulty I had in getting up from the ground, no!" Kate replied, smiling; and then she added, "I wonder where that man who helped me so kindly, could have disappeared to, so quickly; - I wanted to thank him properly, for I am afraid that my fright made me appear very ungrateful."

"Indeed, it did not, Miss Sturgis; both you and your cousin were glorious through it all; most young ladies would have gone into hysterics, and frightened a fellow out of his wits."

Madge was thankful that she had reserved her tears for the shadow of the tree-trunk, and smiled bewitchingly at Mr. Godfrey's compliment.

A little later, Grove, much heated from his exertion, joined the trio.

"Mr. Godfrey," he exclaimed, "I am sorry that your first meeting with my friends should be under such perturbed circumstances, but we promise you a more cheerful reception when we welcome you to our home, which I hope may be soon. But how is it that you are prowling about Norcott? Where is Winthrop? I fancied you miles from here."

"We came up, last night, on our way to Saxony," said Mr. Godfrey. "To-day ends our bivouacing."

"I didn't suppose Winthrop equal to such a stretch," said Grove, laughing.

"It is a sort of recreation rather out of his line,"

replied Mr. Godfrey. "It was good-natured in the old fellow to humor me, but I think it has done him good, although he has devoted rather too much of his attention to a certain mummy of a classic which never leaves his pocket, or I should say, his company, for it leaves his pocket a great deal too often, for my fancy."

Mrs. Sturgis was now seen beckoning, and waving her hand toward the fading West.

"Can I do anything to help you?" asked Mr. Godfrey, as he got up to go.

"Thank you, we shall get on very well," replied Grove. "Mr. Erskine will take charge of my mother and the heroines, and as for the rest of us, I think without doubt that we can secure *something* on wheels, at an old house at the foot of the hill."

"Is n't he nice?" Madge said, confidentially to Kate, as she threw herself back in the phæton, as soon as Mr. Godfrey had stated his plans, and said good-bye. "It seems as if he were an old friend, already, and oh, what fun it has been!"

Madge seemed in a much merrier mood, as she sat back against the soft cushions, murmuring rhapsodical little remarks, in Kate's ear, than did poor Chipie and the other pedestrians, as they toiled down the rough hill, laden with the things which they dared not leave behind, and which could n't be crowded into the phæton.

But, fortunately, a large carryall was secured from the farm-house, and after much waiting and confusion, the horses' heads were finally turned homeward. As Chipie rode along, thinking over the accident which had come so near being tragic, she wondered if Madge and Kate appreciated the care and forethought which Mr. Erskine had shown for their comfort. How serious he had been through it all! Chipie hadn't seen him smile, once, since Walter Godfrey had rushed upon them with the news!

CHAPTER IX.

THE following morning was damp and chilly, and a spirit of ennui seemed to have fallen upon the group gathered in the *sans-souci*, attracted thither by the cheerful warmth of the open fire. Madge and Kate were feeling the full effects of their catastrophe, and were ensconced in the corners of an hospitable sofa, languidly playing "Crambo." Owing to the sharp twinges of pain from the indignant bruises, and the stiff fingers, which almost refused to transcribe their brains' gems of thought, the poems inclined to a melancholy strain, most touching; life's brevity, sorrow and disappointment, were dwelt upon with a serenity beautiful to behold thus early in youth.

Grove was lying on a divan, apparently dozing, but suddenly, sitting upright, he exclaimed, in a frenzy :

"Quick, quick! A pencil and paper! I, too, have an inspiration!"

Madge, startled by the brisk tone, from the tristful mood which she was enjoying, glanced up and perceiving Grove's expression, interposed:

"Kate, do n't let him have them; he wants to turn everything into ridicule with those nonsensical rhymes; and we are having such a quiet, dreamy time! I thought, Grove, that you had given up that unmeaning pastime, long since."

"Nonsensical rhymes, do you say? My dear Madge, you mistake. I dote on Lear, as a concise, pithy biographer, and I would that his graphic style were more in vogue. Such a blessing to get at facts, without wading through volumes of unnecessary twaddle. Now listen," and Grove put down the pencil which he had confiscated.

"There was a young lady from Town,
Who wished a steep hill to ride down;
So, ignoring the need
Of employing a steed,
Into a carriage she jumps,
And regardless of bumps
She down the hill thumps,
Which results in the dumps,—
This eccentric young lady from Town."

"Kate, I liked that last idea of yours," remarked

Madge, frigidly, and appearing quite unconscious of Grove's presence. The latter, meeting no encouraging response, even from Chipie, upon whom he relied at such moments, resumed his former lazy position, and smiled to himself, as he observed Chipie at the opposite end of the room, taking a first lesson in chess from Mr. Erskine. How it happened, was not quite clear to Chipie, nor anyone else; it was a secret surprise to everyone in the room, although Madge and Grove were the only ones who acknowledged it aloud, and they, confidentially to each other. Chipie had meant to keep aloof, and, until the previous day had found no trouble in doing so, but her intentions had been baffled; and when it came about that she was ambitious to acquire a knowledge of chess, what could be more natural than that Mr. Erskine, a veteran at the game, should offer to initiate her. She had not purposed accepting the offer, at the time; but this morning, when Mr. Erskine rode up after breakfast, to inquire after Kate and Madge, he was shown into the *sans-souci*, where, remote from Grove and the sonneteers, sat Chipie, engaged in making out a geometrical puzzle; he crossed over to her, after his greetings to the little group, and presently, when Madge raised her eyes, she saw her sister and Mr. Erskine bending earnestly over the puzzle. It was finally solved, and then it would have been anomalous,

indeed, if the chess-table which stood in close proximity, had not recalled to Mr. Erskine the wish expressed the preceding day ; and before she was aware of it, Chipie found herself battling with knights and bishops, with an aptitude which surprised herself, and delighted her instructor.

They were beginning a second game, when Jerrold Winthrop and his friend were announced. As the two young men entered, the contrast between them was striking. Four years had produced no great change in Jerrold, outwardly, save in adding to his height and breadth ; the smooth, sallow face, with its pointed chin and Greek features, looked a shade more Platonic, and the smile, which came rarely, displayed the same sharp, white teeth which had caused Kate, in former days, to like her playfellow better when wearing his blackest scowl, than when forced into a smile. He still exhibited the punctilious elegance in dress which had characterized him as a youth. A faint flicker in the smouldering eyes, as he received Kate's welcome, told of his pleasure at the meeting, but otherwise his features remained unmoved. He took the seat which Grove placed for him, after the introductions had been gotten over, and was, perhaps, for a time the central object of attention. Kate was not the only one in the room who felt some curiosity regarding this new arrival, and his rather unusual ap-

pearance certainly increased it. The conversation ran mostly upon Jerrold's wanderings and homecoming, at first, but finally an opportunity was afforded for a tête-a-tête with Kate, and crossing to her side, Jerrold sat down.

"Miss Kate," he said, with an intense glance, "I wish that I could tell you of the happiness with which I am filled, as I find myself, after the vicissitudes of my last years, in my boyhood's home! While fate—inexorable fate, I may say—has borne me to distant climes, my heart and my memory have never wandered; true to my early friends I return. May I cherish the thought that the past, which associated us so happily, is not wholly obliterated from your own memory, by the interests of later years?"

"Indeed, I have not forgotten the by-gone days," Kate answered frankly. "I enjoyed them too thoroughly to forget them. But does everything look quite natural,—as it did when old Towzer helped us in our good times? Poor Towzer! how we did impose upon his good nature, did n't we?"

Jerrold answered with one of his peculiar smiles, and then went on to recall events connected with childhood, and more especially with youth, in a somewhat sentimental fashion, which amused Kate, and did not entirely please her. Hoping to lead the conversation into a less personal channel, she remarked,

as she glanced towards Madge and Mr. Godfrey, who were chatting away volubly :

“ Your friend must have been a pleasant travelling companion, he seems so bright and merry ! ”

“ Ah, yes, a good fellow, a *very* good fellow ; not marvellously endowed intellectually, but yet, companionable. Miss Kate, pardon a comparison, but you may shortly become cognizant of a difference between my friend and myself ! My friend is pre-eminently a parlor man ! A *parlor man !* ” he repeated with measured accents. “ I regret my inability to compete with him, in this particular, for that it is an advantage is incontestable. But the atmosphere which pervades the drawing-room is detrimental to myself,—it is simply coarctation ; only in the open air, untrammeled by petty conventionality, am I really *myself !* Miss Kate, I anticipate your reply ; are you as devoted an equestrienne as formerly ? ”

“ Oh yes,” replied Kate, biting her lip to keep back a smile, “ I shall never lose my love for riding. I expect that I shall shock my friends when I get into spectacles and caps, by careering over the country as joyously as I do now ! ”

“ May I hope that the old habit of enjoying together our favorite amusement may be revived ! ” asked Jerrold significantly.

“ Indeed, I hope that you, and your friend also, will

join us in our riding jaunts ; they are ever so pleasant ; we ride almost every day now that our cousins are with us, and Mr. Erskine usually accompanies us, so, you see, we have a very imposing cavalcade ! ”

“ Is this Mr. Rogers Erskine of Baltimore ? ” asked Jerrold stiffly, with a suspicious glance towards the gentleman in question.

“ It is ; have you met him before ? ” asked Kate, with what seemed to Jerrold an uncalled for interest.

“ I know him only by report,” responded Jerrold, sententiously. “ He possesses some literary ability, I believe ! ”

Kate smiled to herself at Jerrold’s patronizing tone and manner, and thought, regretfully, Poor Jerrold, have the years been unkind to you—have they done nothing towards subduing your terrible egotism ! and then, as he talked on of his experiences during his absence, Kate watched him, hoping to discover some genuine touch of manliness. What was there about him to have attracted a bright, fun-loving fellow like Walter Godfrey ! To be sure, he was a walking encyclopædia, but it did not seem to Kate as if that were just the sort of companion, judging from what she had seen of him, that Walter Godfrey would have chosen, unless there existed a more cheerful appendix which the “ parlor atmosphere ” was at present, obscuring.

As for Mr. Godfrey, he was becoming, every moment, more impressed by Madge's witchery. Considering that they had met but the day before, they had made remarkable strides on the road to friendship. Madge had displayed all her choicest frogs and storks to his admiring gaze, and little confidences had been exchanged with the frank freedom of a pair of school children.

After the callers had left, Grove took up the morning mail, and running over the addresses, selected one with a foreign postmark. He tore it open, read it through, and at the end ejaculated with a laugh :—

“Aha! but the fates are good! This is a prime joke, girls!”

The girls looked up inquiringly, from their letters.

“I hope that you will be pleased with the news,” proceeded Grove, beamingly. “Under the circumstances, I suppose that *one more* will make no difference! The fact is, I expect, two weeks from tomorrow, to meet our dear Carl Von Weckbecker in New York, and bring him back for the summer.”

A long merry laugh greeted this announcement, and then Chipie exclaimed;

“It is too droll, after all our plans and expectations! But Grove, when is it to stop?”

“It is safe to conclude that this will be the *last* of the *season*,” laughed Grove; “unless,” he added, Mr.

Allyn, and some other of your disinterested friends, chance to learn that Saxony is a famous angling spot, and then Heaven only knows when the end will come!"

"But how did you bring it about?" asked Kate.
"What did you say to him?"

"Everything that I could think of, to induce him to come at once. I pictured in glowing colors, the manifold attractions; open wood-fires, for grey days; spreading trees and shady waters, for bright days; and fair maidens and noble knights, for all days. This is the result."

"I am delighted," said Kate. "What a gala company we shall be!"

"Does Mr. Van Weckbecker speak English, well, or must we polish up our German?" asked Madge, with some anxiety.

"Not a word of English does he speak," said Grove, tantalizingly. "You must spend every minute, for the next two weeks, in practising your gutturals; otherwise you will find no favor in the eyes of the Adonis I am to introduce."

Madge made a grimace, and Kate asked:

"Will it be necessary for you to meet him?"

"Yes; or at least, I wish to do so, and I am sorry to say that I shall be obliged to leave here a week beforehand, on account of a little business matter which

I have to attend to. But you wo n't notice my absence, with so many attendants waiting to do your bidding. And you, my dear sisterine, will find your time well filled in giving ear to your newly found friend. Jove! but did n't his glib use of polysyllables quite stagger your simple-minded brother!"

Chipie, who had commenced rearranging the chess-table, now came over to where Kate was standing, and taking her hand, impressed a kiss upon her finger-tips.

"Miss Kate, thy charms increased an hundred-fold, render me speechless! Pardon, but what think'st thou of *me*?"

"Come, Chipie, do n't make fun of the poor boy! I see plainly that we have a work of charity—the long suffering kind—before us."

"Ah! Kate's face shows that she intends putting into practical use the hints gleaned from that educational work which she was so bound up in, last week," said Chipie. "But do n't be too hopeful of results, my dear, for I fear you wo n't find a very receptive soil to work upon!"

CHAPTER X.

IT was midnight when Grove and his friend Carl sprang from the boat-train, upon the deserted platform of the Wilmingham dépôt. Hardly awakened from the nap out of which they had been routed, they proceeded to shake off remaining drowsiness by a vigorous stamping, and then walked up the long platform.

"Look here, Grove, it will be one grand joke if your machine is not yet arrived, eh!"

"Ah, my dear Carl," replied Grove, with a shrug, "do n't alarm yourself! Tony is one of the few things this side of Heaven of which I'm sure. I have n't an idea that our journey is to end other than all right. Of course they got the telegram!"

A moment later, Carl espied a heavy family carriage drawn up in front of the station, and standing

by the horses, a dignified old negro, whom he rightly decided to be Tony. At the sight of the two figures, the smiling servant threw open the door and stepped back.

"I'se mos' 'fraid, Mass'r Grove, yah wus gwine t' dispint us! Reckon de train be a good ten minutes precrastinated; Ise done been waitin dis haf hou. Vilet say, 'go long ole man and done keep Massr Grove wait-n, fur its bes' fur de niggers t' wait den white fokes.'"

Grove laughed good-naturedly, and turning towards his friend, motioned him in.

"Come, old fellow, stow yourself away! Here Tony, take care of the traps!"

After the door closed upon them and the horses had started off on a sharp trot, Carl gave one or two sleepy glances from the window, then settled himself back in the corner, and was soon fast asleep, oblivious to the wide avenue through which they were whirling, over-arched by elms which were the pride of the Wilmington inhabitants.

At last he was aroused by the stopping of the carriage and Grove's voice, exclaiming gaily:

"Wake up, old fellow—wake up! Here we are at home!—Peace be upon it!"

Carl opened his eyes, yawned, and looked curiously out. He saw that they were at the head of a large

lake which sparkled in the moonlight like a sheen of gems. A little beyond, weird and mysterious in the white light, with moving shadows, thrown by the stirring branches, lay the rambling range of buildings with their irregular roofs and broad eaves.

The older parts of the house, which had come into existence two hundred years back, bore witness to their birth date by the low-studded rooms, strange crannies and staircases, in the most unexpected places, and a general air of antiquity. In its day it had been considered a commodious dwelling, but as the years rolled on, it became merely a nucleus about which rooms of ancient and modern architecture grouped themselves in picturesque irregularity. It had grown to proportions which fairly bewildered the plain country folk about, and many an aggrieved look had been cast upon it by the honest farmers, trundling along on their carts, who pronounced it a "a devilish big piece of tom-foolery." "Why not fix the rooms up together in some sort o' decent shape, and knock them red bunnits off the top, and make the place look like a Christian," they said one to another.

Carl's poetic German nature responded at once to the romantic homestead, and, enraptured by his first glimpse, he jumped out, and taking off his hat, waved it enthusiastically above his head.

"Eh! Eh! And this is the charming American

home of my friend and brother! Most beautiful! Most beautiful! I enshrine thee anew, fair home of which I have so many times dreamed, in the innermost recesses of my loving soul! *Der Himmel segne dich, du süsse Heimath in der Neuve Welt!*"

"Good, my dear fellow! I'm right glad that you think the old home pretty. I hope that the garish light of day wo n't diminish the charm for you. Moonlight is a great beautifier, you know!"

But come now, I can't let you stay here any longer. I insist that you follow me, put a crust of bread between your teeth and then swing yourself into your berth. You want to look your prettiest, tomorrow, you know, for you have to run the gauntlet of dozens of critical eyes,—blue, black, brown, grey, hazel, and —green too, in all probability; the latter will be sharpest of all, and not a line or wrinkle will escape them."

Grove linked his arm in that of his friend, and approaching one of the side doors, took out his latch-key and was endeavoring to make a quiet entrance, when the door was noiselessly opened, and Violet, resplendent in a new scarlet and orange turban, stood beaming upon them.

"Bress yah, Massr Grove, specs yah done glad t'git under shelter! It's a gittin fur on to de new born day, an ebry buddy but I'se soun asleep."

"And you ought to be, auntie," Grove answered pleasantly. "Carl, this is the dear old mammie who used to give me such jolly spankings, once on a time. She does n't look as if she could have been so hard-hearted, but it is only too true!" and then he added, as Violet chuckled with proud delight, "Auntie, you may bring us a little lunch in the library, and do it quietly that it may n't disturb anyone."

"Bress yah, chile, Madam done have it all 'pared wid her own hands; would n't let nobuddy else done tech it!" and Violet led the way to where a dainty repast was spread, a white rosebud of welcome lying on each plate. The friends lingered long over the cozy lunch. Carl's drowsiness had forsaken him, and he grew more and more animated as the time flew by. At last, however, Grove got up hastily, and seized him by the shoulder, exclaiming:

"Carl, boy, what are you thinking of! Look at my watch. We shall have the whole family down upon us if we stay here any longer. A fine, haggard specimen you 'll be to present at the breakfast table! Now I 'll conduct you to your room, via this corridor and flight of stairs; happy dreams be with you, and when you wake up, find your way, if you can, to the breakfast room. Yes, I am in earnest; just for the sport of the thing see if you can accomplish it without help; if you do, you 'll have the advantage over any guest ever entertained here!"

"Eh! I'm ready, with joy, to prove my superior *in-tel-li-gence*," replied Carl. "And is it that I arise the first happy day, when I shall please?"

"Yes, have a good sleep, and if you do n't appear by eleven o'clock, we shall send a guide to you, and we sha' n't be surprised, in the least, if you are found hidden away in some corner, saying reprehensible words in German!"

After a hearty hand-shake, Grove turned back to get his travelling-bag which he had left in the hall, and as he did so, a dark figure darted back under the stairs. He turned on the light and revealed Princess, in an orange wrapper, looking like a hob-goblin as she shrank, trembling, into the corner. Finding that the wall remained impregnable, she sidled out and looking up mournfully, observed:

"Specs Massr Grove done want Ise t' tote up his v'lise ! Ise jis com t' fetch it, Massr."

"Look here, you elfin," said Grove, failing to sound as austere as he wished, "tell me what brings you about at this hour! Is it your usual hour for rising, or is it that you were '*anguishing*' to welcome me—or what is it?"

"Reckon Ise mighty glad t' see yah, Massr Grove, an spes Ise want t' see is de new gemmen jolly."

"Well, and what is your decision?"

"Reckon he be a heap like a gemman wot used

t' visit my Madam in Washington ; he look 'cisely like 'im anyhow, and he used t' gib me heaps ob pennies."

"Princess, this gentleman is altogether unlike the one who visited your Madam, so do n't let me know of your prying around again. Now take this penny to make you remember what a wicked monkey you 've been, and—scamper!"

It was about nine o'clock when Carl awoke, and with keen pleasure and curiosity started upon his exploration. On one side, his room opened into a corridor, from which he descended a circular staircase into a hall, the polished floor of which was strewn with tiger skins. He paused a moment with interest, as he stepped into a room so low that he had only to rise slightly in order to touch the heavy cross-beam of carved oak, which age had mellowed into umber. The chimney-piece corresponded in finish with the cross-beam, and was set with richly tinted tiles, while the shelves displayed a choice collection of ceramic treasures. The solid furniture was good to behold in its antiquity, and altogether it formed a strange contrast to the sight which met Carl's eyes, as he drew aside the curtain from a broad archway leading to a room of grand proportions. Facing him, as he entered, was an immense door reaching almost to the ceiling, and so skilfully had the beautiful, bronzed-tinted carbon photographs of the Ghiberti panels of

the Baptistry Gate, been set into the richly cut wood-work, that Carl stopped before it, transfixed,—the memory of happy bygone days at the Duomo, rushing upon him and bearing him quite out of the present. On one side of the room stood a cabinet, supporting casts of Michael Angelo's *Day and Night*, and above hung a *Mona Liza*. Carl ever after, termed this apartment, the *Salon Ghiberti*. Had he pulled aside the crimson curtain at one end of the room, he would have discovered the place, of all others, which Grove most cared for. It was the organ-room,—a peaceful spot filled with a subdued light, which fell through the stained window above the organ, while the hanging brass lamps, the crucifix suspended at one side, and, indeed, all the appointments were in such complete harmony, that the music loving soul had but to enter, to be *satisfied*.

Carl, however, passed it without notice, and a second arched entrance carried him into the billiard-room. The sound of distant voices hurried him on through a hall, and he next found himself in a long, low room, with crimson walls, fantastically hung with relics of years' accumulation; a mammoth fireplace took up nearly half of one side, and was guarded by a pair of huge brass lions; a door at the lower end led to the servants' quarters, and opposite the fireplace a wide, folding-door, stood ajar; over the entrance a gallery

opened from an upper room, and here Carl recognized a piece of Grove's originality. He stopped in admiration as he beheld the miniature of what the Duomo organ-loft might have been; it was made by fitting the panels with large photographs of Della Robbia's *Singing Boys*. Again his thoughts wandered;—he was in sunny Florence:—time and place were forgotten; when suddenly a merry laugh caused him to turn.

“*Willkommen in der Heimath, Brüder Carl!*”

With a beaming face Kate stood before him.

“And now I am sure that you are ready for a guide! Grove begged us to let you find us, but at last I convinced him that it was a shamefully inhospitable welcome and not a bit funny,—so here I am!”

Carl had grasped Kate's hands firmly, but his face wore such a puzzled expression that Kate laughed gaily.

“Why, Carl, must I really introduce myself? Am I so much changed?”

“Indeed, I cannot persuade myself that before me stands the little Rena whom I already knew in Italy, and on the loved Alster! The little sailor whose patient spirit I unhappily rended because that my oars went never together, even after much rebuking?”

“But you must n't *persuade* yourself into any such deception, for do n't you see I am no longer the little

Rena! But Carl!" in a more serious tone, "I am so glad, so very glad to see you. You don't know what a pleasure it is to us all to have you at last in our New England Home!"

"Eh, thanks, thanks, dear Rena," was the emotional response. "I would have you to re-cognize the joy that thrills my heart as I behold this charming home and recall to my soul the dreams which, in the dear Faderland, it has occasioned to me. But my sweetest dreams would never arrive to this charming reality."

"Then you like it Carl?" said Kate, smiling.

"Eh, I cannot express myself! This home combines effects most exquisite and womantic! It brings the beauty of the Old World to commingle most charmingly with that of the New World!"

Here the sound of Grove's voice floated in, and Kate conducted the smiling guest up a short flight of steps to the breakfast-room, which was separated from a large drawing-room by a heavy screen, the four panels painted to represent the Seasons.

"Our New England Seasons!" Kate explained, as Carl paused before Spring,—a pretty hillside, partly snow-covered; the sturdy little arbutus blossoms peeping from their downy bed, while a blue-bird swinging on an over-hanging bough seemed to be singing a song of praise for the welcome forerunner of summer days.

"I need not to ask whose hand created this!" said Carl. "The breath from these little messengers was one day wafted to me across the waters."

"Grove has been telling tales, then!" said Kate, as she stepped aside and motioned Carl to precede her.

The morning sunlight streamed through the open doors and windows as Carl entered, and his quick eye took in every point of beauty from the green lawn stretching an eighth of a mile to the park beyond,—to the bunch of pansies by each plate, and the delicate vase of morning-glories upon the table.

This, and the sight of the graceful queen-mother, with dainty breakfast cap and robe, advancing to meet him, with outstretched hands, made a picture in Carl's mind which was never forgotten in thinking of his first peep into an American home.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER breakfast, Kate proposed that Carl should be conducted through the house, thinking that he would enjoy its originality, and also feel more at home and be less likely to lose his way in the labyrinth of turns and windings. In the north wing they came upon Kate's studio, and Carl's face showed genuine delight as he slowly scanned the well filled walls. When Kate pushed a chair towards him, he quickly declined :

"Eh, thanks, but I must not sit in the midst of all this genius!" and he proceeded to examine the flower-groups, portraits, and some half finished sketches of Major and the horses. Upon an easel stood a covered canvas which Grove persisted in seeing, and after

much hesitation and evident reluctance, Kate withdrew the cloth and disclosed a partially completed portrait of Chipie.

"There! it is very good in me to show this! I don't like people to see my half-finished pictures!"

"Eh!" exclaimed Carl, "you are to make a success, Rena."

Grove inspected the head critically, standing first on this side, then on that.

"Yes," he replied, at length, seating himself, "it will be capital! When did you begin it, Kate?"

"The morning after you left home. I've always wanted to paint Chipie, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to begin while you were away, and we weren't having anything special to take up our time."

"But how did you happen to get up that uncommonly bewitching expression, for the occasion, Chipie!" asked Grove.

"My usual expression when no disturbing element is present," was the answer. "I assure you that we spent a very peaceful week, didn't we, Kate? But Grove," she continued, "am I such a little yellow-faced thing as that is going to represent?"

"Not by gas-light!" said Grove, pleasantly, as he soberly viewed the unfinished face.

"But Grove and Carl, do you really think it will

be good?" asked Kate, anxiously. I want it to be quite wonderful, for I mean it for an heir-loom. Besides, who knows that it will not be the means of making me famous!"

"I think, Rena, that you have, indeed, the fire of genius within your soul," exclaimed Carl, impulsively.

"Oh, no, Carl," said Kate, with a little laugh, "it is nothing grander than a small bit of talent, and perhaps I have n't a right to claim even that; I sometimes think that I have n't—my efforts are so terribly discouraging, oftentimes!"

"Eh, you are altogether wrong, Rena," exclaimed Carl, earnestly. "It is more than talent which shall develop work like this. Eh, these are poems!" and Carl placed himself before a mass of cut flowers.

"Are n't they lovely, Mr. Carl?" asked Chipie, "just study the light on those jacquemenot petals!"

"You dear, enthusiastic souls," cried Kate, laughing, "It's delicious to listen to you. What a balm it is to have friends!"

"Now, Kate, do n't be sarcastic. You know Mr. Carl is a connoisseur in Art, and as for myself, I never bestow praise for mere friendship's sake,—you know that!"

"Oh, but if you had seen the lights on the real roses!" cried Kate, clasping her hands. "Mine were like burlesques when placed beside the living models!"

Carl, you may look at this if you like ; it is a memory sketch of long ago ! ” and she placed a water-color drawing on the easel, in which Grove and Carl were recognizable, and under which was written, “ Our Life in Mentone.”

Presently Grove took Carl away, and the girls were left to their own devices. Chipie seated herself on her throne opposite the easel, but that her thoughts were intent upon something other than her portrait, was apparent.

“ Girls,” she exclaimed, after a while, “ is n’t it strange how things turn out ? ”

“ What are you thinking of,” asked Kate, holding up her palette-knife, and inspecting the tint of rose-madder which it held.

“ Well,” reflectively, “ I was thinking how little we thought, when we were planning for a quiet, solitary summer, that it would end in this way ! Think of our having, after all, four unlooked-for knights in our midst ! ”

“ It is droll enough ! ” responded Kate, musingly. “ If we accept the fore-ordination doctrine, we must conclude that the invasion is for some especial reason. Then comes the query,—What can the reason be ? ”

“ Fore-ordination ! ” ejaculated Madge. “ Bah ! I hope none of us believe in anything so dreadful. Everything happens by chance—happy chance in this

case. You believe that it is nothing more solemn than chance, don't you, Chipie?"

"I do n't know what I do believe," was the somewhat thoughtful answer. "Kate, what has made you hostess to so many guests, this summer,—Fate, or Chance?"

"I'll ponder the subject and give you my answer before the summer is over," was Kate's gleeful reply. "But after all our rage against our interrupted seclusion, we are having delightful times, are n't we?"

"That we are," answered Chipie, and then she added, meditatively: "It is singular how friendships will grow, in a few short weeks, between entire strangers, when thrown together in a quiet spot like this!"

"Very singular!" was Madge's sarcastic reply.

"What do you mean by that tone?" asked Chipie, quickly.

"Why, I was agreeing with you that it is singular how friendships will grow, in a few short weeks. I dare say that Mr. Erskine has often said the same thing to himself, of late," and Madge lifted her brows and pointed her nose serenely upward.

"I suppose you know, Madge, that although we are aunt Paulien's guests, we are also, in a way, hostesses to these gentlemen, and one is obliged to make personal feeling a secondary matter!"

"Certainly, dear, I understand," said Madge, ami-

ably. "I am sure I am only too glad if you have at all overcome your prejudice, for it makes it much more comfortable for all of us. As it is, we form a charming little party, and if it had not been for your thought of your hostess's duty, poor Mr. Erskine would have been quite a white elephant amongst us, now that Mr. Jerrold monopolizes Kate, as he does. But it is too bad that he could not have been of a respectable age!"

"Respectable age?" exclaimed Chipie, with asperity. "What do you consider a respectable age?"

"Oh, I don't know. Half of Mr. Erskine's, perhaps," said Madge, languidly.

"Pray, how old do you fancy Mr. Erskine?" questioned Chipie, with far more interest in her voice than Madge thought necessary.

"About fifty,—perhaps older. One never can tell the age of elderly men!"

"Madge Margrave, what an absurd child you are! Mr. Erskine *fifty years old!* You compare him with those flippant boys!"

"Flippant? Do you include Mr. Jerrold in your list? However, my dear, if you like old codgers, I'm very glad that Mr. Erskiné is here."

Madge didn't intend to seriously annoy Chipie, but that she had, was evinced by the flush upon her cheek. The last weeks had forced Chipie, much against her

inclination, into a keen admiration of Mr. Erskine's character, and although she had not admitted this, by word of mouth, she had come to rebel, in her heart, at the lack of appreciation with which Madge seemed to regard the new friend.

"I don't wish to intimate that Mr. Erskine is a bore, you know," said Madge, relenting, at her sister's silence; "only I do wish that you wouldn't—both of you—talk incessantly upon such mighty themes. It is distressing to see you so wrapt up in anything, this warm weather. It is a mercy to a poor, light-headed individual like myself, that Mr. Erskine isn't the only visitor here."

Chipie was about to reply, the gleam in her eyes meaning mischief, when Mr. Sturgis appeared in the doorway.

"Am I breaking in upon a morning conference?" he asked. "Excuse me, but I'm going to ride over to the Birches and I am come to see if I can lure the model niece from her pedestal. I want to atone for my act of courtesy, yesterday."

"I shall be delighted to go, uncle Malcolm. Kate doesn't need me—she is only putting in the background. But I'm not a model in any sense, this morning, and I warn you I shall be neither amiable nor amusing."

"What has occurred to trouble your serenity?"

asked Mr. Sturgis, detecting, with his sharp eyes, the flush which had not yet faded.

"For one thing, Kate is putting in a fearful amount of yellow into my complexion, and I can't help feeling sensitive about it," was the careless reply. "Yesterday, I actually saw her mixing in green and a hideous Indian red. I won't have it, uncle Malcolm! I know Kate thinks I have a Chinaman's complexion!"

Mr. Sturgis converted the roll of paper, which he carried, into a telescope, and viewed Chipie and the portrait alternately, nodding his head with satisfaction, after each survey, and presently the two, arm in arm, left the room.

Kate had remained silent during the passage of arms between her cousins. She had been amused, and not a little gratified, at Chipie's manner, for within a fortnight an idea had flashed into her mind, and she was privately enjoying the increasing friendliness between her cousin and friend. Now, she worked rapidly away on her picture, without speaking. Suddenly, Madge exclaimed vehemently:

"Kate, a dreadful thought has just entered my head —*a dreadful thought!*"

Kate turned, her brush midway in the air, and saw Madge gazing at her fixedly.

"What under the sun can it be! It must be dreadful indeed to call up such a dismayed look!"

"Kate, I believe that our Chipie and that man are going to *fall in love with each other!*"

The words were uttered with funereal emphasis, and with an air of helplessness that sent Kate into a long laugh.

"How can you be so flippant, Kate, about anything so serious?" said Madge, rebukingly. "Fancy our Chipie," she went on, who has been almost everywhere, and has had such charming opportunities for engaging herself, finally falling in love with a man as old as papa! It is dreadful!"

"Madge waited for a reply, but none came directly; Kate's risibles were still having their own way.

"Kate, why don't you say something? Do you understand the matter? Have you thought of it, before?"

"Yes, I should like it!" was the decided answer?

"*Kate Sturgis.*"

"I should, Madge. I can't imagine anything nicer. Why do you speak of Mr. Erskine as if he were an antique?"

"Because he is!" was the petulant answer.

"I don't blame Chipie for calling you absurd, Madge. Do you think Mr. Erskine looks old?"

"N-no,—not old, exactly," was the halting response; "but then, we know that he *is* old, and that he doesn't look young like.—Well, he is very different from—from Mr. Carl, and Grove, and Mr. Godfrey."

"Is that your only objection?"

"No, he is too wise and dignified for our gay Chipie."

Kate smiled. "What else do you disapprove?"

"Well—well—he is too old, altogether too old, Kate!"

"That is what you said first, dear. I asked what else!"

"Kate, how unpleasant you seem," exclaimed Madge impatiently. "Am I to understand that you see nothing objectionable in it?"

"If Chipie ever *should* marry Mr. Erskine, the merriest of the wedding guests would be Kate Sturgis. Seriously, Madge, you ought to admire Mr. Erskine. He has lived one of the noblest lives possible for a man to live,—that I knew before he came to us,—and as for his age, he isn't over forty, if he is that; no one could be fresher in spirit and thought than he, and besides, what difference does it make how old people are? It only makes Mr. Erskine wiser, and stronger and better able to respond,—yes, Madge, to respond—to the nobility of Chipie's character. Underneath that girl's gay exterior, she is a rare gem, do you know it, Madge?"

"Of course I do," affirmed Madge. "That is why I think she ought not to be easily satisfied."

"I fancy we could call up a great many sorrowful witnesses to the fact that she could not be easily satisfied," said Kate, lifting her brows.

Madge was beginning to feel subdued. With her chin resting in her hands, she remained for some time gazing out of the window. When she finally spoke, her voice was changed.

"Kate, perhaps you are right! Dear Chipie!—How very odd it seems! I didn't think she would ever care for any one in that way! Now that I think of it seriously, Mr. Erskine does n't seem very old; he enjoys sports of all kinds, and invariably wins at every game we play, except archery, and he is next to you in that even! I remember, Mr. Godfrey said, only a few days ago, that he envied Mr. Erskine more than anyone he knew, because he excelled in so many directions. After all, it must have been his wisdom that overawed me."

"There, Madge, it is simply audacious for us to sit here settling affairs in this calm way. How indignant Chipie would be if she were here to overhear us. We have n't even a foundation for our surmises.

"If Chipie marries—anyone, I mean,—what is to become of the grand novel she is planning? I thought that you considered it wrong to marry when possessed of genius!"

"I never hinted such an idea, Madge. How do you get such erroneous ideas into your head? But I must n't speak again till I get this color laid in. I will listen to you, and that will be much nicer, if you wo n't talk nonsense."

"Ho-hum! why wasn't I gifted, I wonder?" sighed Madge, sinking back into her chair, and watching Kate's quick touches. "I can't paint, I can't write, I'm not a remarkable musician! The only nice thing that I can do, is to decorate Turkish towelling and embroider, and one is never lauded for that accomplishment."

Madge's voice was humble, for once, but it did n't remain so, long. After chatting on for some minutes, she drew a little note-book from her pocket, and began to read aloud the plans and engagements for the next week.

"I am so glad that Mr. Jerrold has asked us to take that lovely sail up the river, Tuesday night! I've always wanted to take it by moonlight."

"Yes, and Mr. Erskine and Carl will see the falls. I am glad, for it is a lovely sail, and I like Saxony to make a good impression upon visitors."

"We have ever so many nice things for next week," Madge said, smiling with satisfaction. "Thursday, General Winthrop has his lawn-party,—of course, that is to please you,—and Friday, we have our Chicopee excursion. Then Grove has projects for the other days. I heard Mr. Erskine and Chipie planning to ride over to Wesley, Monday morning, to see something, I don't know what, which they have discovered to be of historic value," and Madge ended her sentence with a sarcastic smile.

CHAPTER XII.

"MAJOR, what is it? What makes you so restless, old fellow?"

The exclamation came from Kate, as she sat alone in her studio, giving the finishing touches to Chipie's portrait, which, owing to many interruptions, had seemed destined never to be completed. She had been working diligently upon it all the morning, having given up the fishing-party on account of Madge, who had hurt her ankle slightly, the previous day, and was prudent enough to see that a day's tramping expedition would n't benefit it. Kate wanted to finish her picture before the party returned, and until about a half an hour before, Madge had been in the studio with her, reading aloud.

The day had been warm and sultry, but Kate had

kept at her easel unflaggingly. At last, however, she threw down her brush, and stepped back to survey her work. As she did so, a shadow fell across the canvas, and a low growl from Major, made her turn towards the window. For some time the dog had been showing signs of uneasiness, but Kate had been too deeply absorbed in her painting to notice it, save by an occasional ejaculation. Now she approached the window and looked out. Heavy clouds had been rolling up in gigantic masses, and the sky met her gaze with threatening menace. Was Major's howl an instinctive expression of coming danger? A thrill ran through Kate, as she stood for a moment lost in wonder at the scene before her, and then she remembered, with a start, that Madge had said something as she left the room, about going to the lake to practice feathering her oars.

"What if she is in the boat, and the storm overtakes her?" cried Kate, aloud. "With her inexperience she will be helpless!"

Ringing the bell hastily, she ran to her room, and had just gotten into her boating suit, when Violet, trembling and frightened, appeared, exclaiming:

"O, honey chile, whar, fur de good Lord's sake am Mis' Madge? Do she done com' in yet?"

"I don't know, Violet. Do you know anything about her?" Kate cried, her fears increased by the servant's face and voice.

"O, Mis' Kate, I specs fur shu she be in de boat; she com' t' me a good haf hou' go, an ax fur de basket fur t' tote posies in, an say as how she wus gwine t' take a row, an did Tony hab de boat-house key. O, honey, its commin a dum foundn storm fur shu!"

As if to verify her words, a crash of thunder rent the air. Without another word, Kate flew down the stairs, and was rushing from the house, when a thought sent her back to Violet.

"Violet, unless mamma wakes, do n't disturb her, and do n't let her know about Madge, for it would only alarm her. Go instantly, and send Tony and Cæsar to the lake."

A second after, when Kate opened the outer door, it was blown back, with a bang! and the air, so oppressive a few moments before, was filled with the shrieks of the rampant wind. The storm had broken in all its fury, and the rain poured down in torrents. In quick succession came the booms of thunder and lightning flashes, as Kate, bowing her head to receive the deluge, ran as fast as she could make her way against the battling elements. She was drenched before she had gotten half way to the boat-house. With suspended breath, she turned the curve which brought the broad lake into view, and shielding her eyes, gazed intently out. Like a miniature ocean, the

waves gathered and tossed. The trees creaked and swayed as if in agony at the remorselessness with which their limbs were being snapped from them and sent whirling through the air. Just as Kate caught sight of the frail barque in the distance, whirling and twirling like a frightened humming-bird, a deafening peal thundered forth, and a minute after, the beech tree which had supplied Donald's squirrels with nuts for years, was blasted to the base. Kate raised her voice ;—

“ Madge, Madge, courage ! courage ! ”

With mocking rage, the wind caught the words, drowning them in the thudding waters. The small field-glass which Kate had brought down, disclosed Madge sitting in the bottom of the boat. Her boating experience had never extended beyond a graceful pull on an unruffled surface, and she had found herself unable to cope in this emergency. The boat-house door was unlatched, but when Kate pushed it open, she found to her dismay, that the only boat unfastened was a heavy scull. The keys had been taken, by Madge it afterwards proved,—and there wasn't a moment to spend in waiting for help. The clumsy thing must be taken, and with a despairing glance at the lighter boats, Kate pushed off. She had passed through one or two exciting storm adventures in her life, but nothing equal to this. She could see poor

Madge tossing about like a chip, far across the lake, which had never before seemed so immense.

"Oh, why did it happen to-day?" she groaned, as she made desperate efforts to keep her direction against opposing forces. "To think that even papa is away!"

She gave another shout of encouragement, and although Madge caught but an echo, she was comforted by the sight of her cousin who, in spite of impeded progress, was lessening the distance between them. A fresh glimmer of courage caused her to seize her one oar, the other having been wrested from her, which she brandished from side to side, aimlessly; but she again abandoned it as Kate came up as nearly alongside as the tempest would allow.

"Madge, put down your oar and listen to me. Stop crying, Madge! Every moment is precious, and our only hope for safety depends upon keeping calm. I will get my boat as close to yours as I can, and with both hands hold on to the skiff, and when I say '*Now*,' you must step over."

"Oh, I can't, I can't!" moaned Madge, as the two boats struck against each other and then swept apart. "Think what a risk it is! One lurch and I should be lost!" Pale and trembling, she stared at her cousin.

"Madge, you must! It is your only chance. This

torrent may keep up an hour longer, and already see the condition of your boat! If you remain, you must founder or be capsized! Now for action!"

She gave a dexterous stroke, shipped her oars like a flash, and grasped the side of the tiny skiff. The sucking of the waves made it almost impossible to hold, even for a moment, but a supernatural strength had come to her.

"Madge, now!"

With a gasp, Madge stood up and half tottered, half leaped into the boat. Her feet had hardly touched bottom, when a circling eddy sent the skiff apart, tossed it on its side, and a minute after, it sank."

As Kate began her backward pull, she felt the weight of the boat increasing so rapidly, that it aroused her suspicions; she saw that, violent as was the storm, the water could not fill in so fast unless there were a leak. Solitude for Madge had kept the thought from occurring to her before, but, now, the bubbling and gurgling left no ground for doubt. She attempted to quicken her strokes, but it was like pulling against a leaden weight. Her arms were becoming numb, and her heart sank with the thought that perhaps, after all, her efforts had been for naught. They were still but a little beyond the middle of the lake. She drew in her oars for a moment's respite; if it were not for Madge, she felt that she would

willingly give up the contest!—A torpor was seizing her!" "Oh, how delightful," she murmured dreamily, "to lie back and sleep! What was Madge saying?" "Kate, why do you stop rowing? You aren't going to let us drown, after all? Oh, Kate, pull,—do pull! You know I can do nothing!"

The words sounded vague and far away to Kate, and she asked herself, wonderingly, "Why does Madge care to live?" Then came the remembrance of a hideous turtle, which Donald had captured a day or two before, when trolling for pickerel; it had snapped the line and gone down just where the boat was now rocking; "If the boat should sink," she thought vaguely, "they would find the ugly monster, and a lot of its fellows, waiting to wreak vengeance upon their human enemies!"

Again a volley of thunder filled the air, and the lurid sky, as it clove in twain, illumined the bank, showing a figure with clasped hands, outlined against the boat-house.

The cry which had rung from one servant to another, that "Mis' Kate wur drownding in de boat," had reached Mrs. Sturgis, as, awakened by the storm, she had stepped to her window to look out. She had sped to the lake, and was now enduring the agony of seeing her child's peril, while she was powerless to aid in the rescue. At least, so it seemed to her, but

in truth, the sight of that figure on the shore proved the most effectual help to Kate. It acted like an electric shock—the growing lethargy was dispelled, and resuming her oars, she bent forward. If she and Madge were to be drowned, it should not be because of her inaction.

Slowly the boat made way, and it was only when within a few yards of the shore, that Kate's supernatural strength, which had been given her a second time, gave way, and the servants who, in their terror, had waded out as far as they could, were able to clutch the boat, just as their young mistress fell forward lifeless.

"Take care of mamma and Madge!" were the last words which her cousin heard.

CHAPTER XIII.

"WONDERFUL!" "Delicious!" "Delightful!" were some of the glad ejaculations, as the fishing-party came in sight of Chavenage, just at sunset, the day's success showing itself in the strings of fine bass.

"What a renewing everything has had, this afternoon!" exclaimed Grove, motioning towards the dripping shrubs and trees sparkling with the gold of sunset. "I, for one, cry blessing on thunder-storms, in spite of the ruin they bring on lunch baskets!"

"And I echo your cry," said Chipie gaily. "I never saw anything so furious before! How Kate would have enjoyed it if she had been with us! She revels in storms, you know!"

"Yes, the day has been complete!" said Donald, as he dwelt with pride upon his fishy treasures. "But

I tell you what! I thought we were in for a drenching just before that old shanty hove in sight. We were lucky that we were n't caught on the water; we should have been booked for 'kingdom come,' if we had been!"

"It was uncommon luck, getting housed as we did," said Grove. "It gave us precious little warning, considering our scattered belongings, but as the lunch-baskets were the only sufferers, we may congratulate ourselves, for it showed us a sight from our little shelter, well worth the trouble we were put to."

"I suppose that auntie and the girls have been worrying about us, all the afternoon," observed Winy, regretfully; "and there we were enjoying every bit of it."

Alas! the poor hearts little guessed how small a share they had had in the afternoon's anxiety! As the carriage drove through the gate-way, Mr. Erskine and the friends from Wildwood having said good-by and driven on, Dr. Francke's old-fashioned chaise was noticed standing by one of the side-doors. The horse's steaming sides indicated sharp trotting. Dr. Francke was emphatically an humane old gentleman, and unless a case of life or death demanded it, he never raised a lather on his horse's coat. Grove knew this, and the sight of the panting animal made him start involuntarily. His glance flew to the house. The

doors and shutters usually open at this hour, were closed. From one to another, quick, anxious glances passed, and the war-whoop with which Donald was about to herald their arrival, died upon his lips. Grove helped the girls out, and hurried towards the house, where at the door he was met by Mrs. Sturgis and Dr. Francke. It didn't need the warning finger, which the former held up, to tell that something sorrowful had happened; the white face and sad eyes told the story only too plainly.

"Mother, it is n't *Kate!*" whispered Grove, hoarsely, as he grasped the hand held out to him.

For reply, Mrs. Sturgis turned and motioned the group, for the others had quickly followed Grove, into the library; and with the eager eyes fastened upon her, she sat down and related the afternoon's cruel adventure.

"Madge was very much frightened; otherwise she was uninjured," she said. "But Kate,—my brave Kate! Children it is terrible! She is lying now as lifeless as when lifted from the boat."

Mrs. Sturgis bowed her head; she did not weep—she could not;—that must come later; now, she must speed back to watch for a life-sign in her child's face. Then, too, she must hide her own grief, and do what she could to lighten the misery settling upon the faces around her. Grove's features were white and

set, as he gave Chipie a look of entreaty to comfort his mother, and left the room.

Doctor Francke was standing in the doorway, looking at his watch, as Grove came forward.

"My poor fellow," he said kindly, "this is a sad return for you, but don't take it too seriously; we will bring the little sister out all right, if things do look a little black just now."

"Doctor, tell me the truth. Is there any real danger? Does this state, which Kate is in, mean more than an awful reaction from overtaxed strength and excitement?"

"Grove, boy," said the good man, putting his hand earnestly upon Grove's shoulder, "I think that I am safe to say that the child will come out all right, but a hard illness,—perhaps a long illness—must come first; that is inevitable after the complete prostration which she has undergone. Where she knocked up strength to carry the deuced affair through, passes my comprehension. No wonder that her arms are swollen to twice their proper size; and to think, too, of the cold drenching on top of all the rest! 'Twas a deuced bad piece of business."

Grove remained standing a minute, and then turned away.

"One moment, my boy," said Dr. Francke, holding out a detaining hand, "You well know how tenderly

I love the little sister ; my one thought is now for her. Of course I shall remain here all night. I have one or two calls to make first, but no change is likely to occur before my return, and in any case, your mother knows what to do."

Grove left him drawing on his gloves, and went slowly to Kate's room, where he approached the bedside and knelt down. Could it be that this was the same face that had beamed the merry good-by to him, in the morning ! Death was well counterfeited ; white and still the face rested upon the pillow ; the brown hair was brushed back from the pure forehead, and the hands remained outside the sheet, as they had been placed. What if the beautiful grey eyes had opened for the last time ! What if doctor Francke had mistaken the meaning of this stillness ! Grove bowed his head, and for a time the very air throbbed in sympathy.

It was only when his mother's hand was placed gently upon his head, that he arose ; pointing to the face on the pillow, he whispered hoarsely :

"What does it mean ?"

"It means, Grove, that we have a battle to fight, and to fight it well, we must prepare ourselves with brave hearts. Now, dear, leave me here, and go down to dinner. Do make it as cheerful as possible for the girls and Donald, for they are in such a bewildered

condition. I've just spoken to Tony about meeting papa; he comes on the eight o'clock train. I dread the shock this will give him, terribly!"

"I will be on the watch for him, motherdy, and make it as easy as I can," and with a last pained look toward the bed, Grove left the room. On his way to the dining-room he stopped at Madge's door, and knocked. Madge opened it; she looked pale and tired, and had evidently taken cold, for she was wrapped up in a white cloak, and her head was bandaged, but so disguised by a white lace scarf as to be rather effective than otherwise. Madge hadn't an idea of making herself ugly, under any circumstances. She was in anything but an agreeable mood, when Grove presented himself, for she felt that she deserved far more consideration than she had received, since her aunt's first inquiries and attentions; thus, it was with an air of petulance that she sank into an arm-chair, and waited for her cousin's words of condolence.

"My dear little Madge, you've had a pretty hard time, have n't you?" Motherdy has been telling us how frightened you were. You look pale, poor child; can I do anything for you?"

"Thank you, nothing; but Grove, why does n't Chipie come to me? Does she *know* what frightfnl peril I have been in, and that I have been simply

snatched from the jaws of death? It seems that no one has been especially overburdened on my behalf!" and Madge gave an injured little sniff.

"Poor child, you are unnerved," responded Grove, rather mechanically, it must be confessed, for he was in no mood to offer consolation, and Madge's selfishness jarred upon him. He tried to comfort her, however, and presently Chipie came in. She looked surprised to see Madge gotten up with such studied care; she couldn't help exclaiming, a little impatiently, after bestowing a kiss upon her sister's petulant looking lips:

"Why Madge, where *did* you find heart to go to all that trouble? I feel as if I could never again do another bit of prinking."

"For my part I think it is quite as easy to make one's self presentable as ugly, and it is certainly much more agreeable to one's friends," remarked Madge, rather frigidly. "Chipie, you aren't nice at all; you are cross, and your hairpins are sticking out in all directions. Please don't stay in my room, till you make yourself fresh."

Madge turned away languidly, and Chipie, smoothing Grove's forehead softly, said:

"And now, Grove, what can I do to relieve auntie, and make myself of use?"

"There is nothing at present, Chipie, unless you

will try to cheer up Winny and Donald. Let us go down to dinner, now, if we don't care about it, for motherdy will feel relieved to know that we are there."

"Very well," responded Chipie, "in three minutes I shall be ready to go down. I will find Donald and bring him in; I think I know his hiding place, poor boy!"

Soon after, Chipie crossed the drive towards a hammock hidden away amongst some tall shrubs; as she did so, she saw the fine bass, which they had all been glorying in, scattered about on the drive, while Beno, the Angola cat, was reaping the benefit of the day's patient toil, and her own slyness; it struck her with a pathetic feeling of half amusement, as she hastened on to where she found, as she had expected, Donald lying with covered face, in the hammock.

"Donnie, dear," she said gently, "I've come to tell you what we've all decided to do for dear aunt Paulien's sake; we are going to be just as cheerful and hopeful as we possibly can be, and not look upon the dark side at all, for it will be such a weight upon auntie to see us miserable in addition to everything else. Won't you be brave and do your part, dear? Winny is in the library, crying; I've been trying to comfort her, but I am sure that no one can do it so well as you can; so you will go in with me, won't you? We are just going in to dinner."

"Oh, I can't, Chip! I don't want any dinner; it makes me sick to think of it. Chip, why in time could n't those stupid blockheads have done something? They ought to have their heads punched—every one of them!"

Chipie welcomed this passionate outburst, thinking far less depressing than the quiet, brooding sorrow, most natural to the boy when hurt, and after a little more urging he got up and accompanied Chipie into the house. Chipie took her aunt's place at the end of the table, but notwithstanding the resolutions to be cheerful, the dinner was a dull, miserable affair, and it was a relief when it was over.

No change had taken place when the doctor returned. Not until two o'clock in the morning did the heavy eyelids unclose, and a pair of wild eyes look out upon the watchers. The lips parted only to utter words of delirium; fever had gotten Kate firm in its grasp, and for hours the loved ones about her, were tortured by her cries for help, and beseeching entreaties to hold the boat, that Madge might be saved. Daylight dawned at last, and the light which forced its way through the closed shutters fell upon anxious faces, unrefreshed by sleep or hope. After breakfast, when the family were gathered in the library to decide upon future action, Mrs. Sturgis said,—her voice full of regret and sadness:

"My dear girlies, tell me what is to be done about all the good times! I can't ask you to stay here through the sad weeks which are before us; that would be unheard of selfishness, when so much brightness awaits you elsewhere!"

"*Aunt Paulien!*" cried Chipie, reproachfully, as she placed herself in front of her aunt, "what sort of girls do you think us? Do you imagine, for a single second, that we could find pleasure anywhere, or would wish to try, while that child is lying up stairs, ill? Auntie, don't send us away! We can't go! If you will let us stay, we will do anything and everything that we can do to help, and when we aren't needed, we will keep so quiet that you will not know we are in the house."

"My dear child," Mrs. Sturgis returned, "it is good in you to say this, but I feel that I ought not to allow the sacrifice. What does Madge say?"

"That Chipie is right, and we want to remain," answered Madge.

Mrs. Sturgis arose and went to the window where she stood for some minutes in silence, and when she resumed her seat, she said, gladly:

"Then dears, if you are really willing to stay and help us bear the burden of anxiety, you shall. I confess," she added, smiling, "that it will be a great comfort, having you! But remember, you will be

shutting yourselves away from all sorts of sea-side and mountain enjoyments; are you sure that you wo'n't regret it?"

"*Auntie!*" was the vehement response; and so it was settled.

It was the first time that any of the young people had been in contact with severe illness, and it took days before the misery of it wore off. But finally the hushed voices and silent footsteps became a part of their life, and they were able to settle down to regular pursuits. A certain number of hours, each day, were devoted to reading and German, in which latter diversion, Carl was invaluable. Chipie spent much time in her own room, and although her fingers were guiltless of ink spots, the thoughtful brow was suggestive.

Carl had accepted Jerrold's invitation to spend the time of Kate's illness, at Wildwood, thinking that it would relieve Mrs. Sturgis from the anxiety of hostess. The gentlemen came daily to make inquiries after Kate, and as for Jerrold, he seemed quite beside himself, and took no pains to conceal his grief and apprehension. Kate would have had no reason to complain of his smile, at this period, for grim and melancholy he wandered about, until Grove grew desperate because courtesy forbade his giving Jerrold a thrashing.

"The beggar!" exclaimed Donald to Winny, a

dozen times a week, "What right has he to go mooning around, about our Kate, I'd like to know!" It was well for Carl that he was n't dependent upon his young host for entertainment, for the position was being filled most questionably.

The days now passed by, much alike, the point of interest, to all, centering in the reports from the sick room. As doctor Francke had predicted, the fever continued to rage long and stubbornly. One week after another went by, bringing no mitigation to the sufferer, until doctor Francke began to look strangely grave.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT the end of four weeks, on a Thursday night, came the verdict which stilled the hearts of the household whose hopes, until now, had never quite forsaken them, even in the darkest hours.

In the early part of the afternoon, Kate had relapsed into unconsciousness, and had ever since been lying as if already beyond the vale.

It was strange that the group, listening breathlessly for doctor Francke's first words, as he came into the room, should have been so entirely unprepared for the sentence. For a minute or two, he said nothing, after taking his seat a little way from the others, but a husky cough from Donald seemed to rouse him to his task, and taking out his handkerchief, he passed it thrice across his forehead, and then in low, pitying accents, spoke :

"My poor hearts, I've fought the enemy like a tiger. I've exhausted my little stock of human knowledge ; there is nothing now but to await the close!"

No one spoke. The dull hearts seemed to have ceased their beating. Grove was first to move ; he got up without speaking, and left the room. Mr. and Mrs. Sturgis had not come down, but the others were all present. Chipie was the first to break the silence :

"Doctor Francke, you do not—*do not* mean that Kate is going to *die*? You can't mean that?"

"My child, I can give you no hope ; there is none. From the beginning I have counted wholly upon her grand constitution, and in fact, it has been my one right for hope."

Donald sat gazing at doctor Francke, as if unable to take in the import of his words. Madge was sobbing bitterly, and Winny clung trembling, to Chipie's hand. For once, Chipie was unable to feel for anyone but herself, and presently she went out ; she was making her way, blindly, to her room, when a muffled groan from the *sans-souci* led her to look in. Grove was lying on a sofa, almost as lifeless, in the dim light, as the figure up stairs. By his side knelt Violet, her black hands tenderly smoothing his hair, while the musical voice poured out words of hope and love.

"Oh, my blessed chile—my dee Massr Grove, do n't fur de good Lord's sake be so broke down. I'se tel'

yah, Massr Grove, I'se no sort ob dissuasion dat de dee lamb am gwine t' be took home t' ole Abram's bosom, yet a spell, no how. Now jes yah listen t' ole Vilet and har fur yah sel' how she done know it! Las' night, I war a settin rockin a long side ob de winder, wen all ob a sudden-like, de room war full ob de glory ob de New Jerusha-land; I set up, all ob a scare-like, wen wot yah tink I see, Honey dee? Jes as shu as de gos' I see a procesh ob the whitest, shiniest angels dat eber yah see, a tunin' ob harps an 'cordions an cimbals. Dey float by all so buful and upliftin, when all ob a sudden-like, our bressed chile com 'long like 'er own self, an beckon t' um did dey want her t' jine um! I eyes um jes as sharp-like, an I see um smile an' nod so comfortin, and den de one wid de longest wings jes tossed our lamb a white rosy wid a heap ob *pedals*—dat's wot de chile calls de leafs ob de posies, *pedals*—onto it, and said as how she would live jes as many yars as dey was pedals onto de rosy,—an' dat war heaps. Now how yah feel, Massr Grove?"

If Grove heard the words he gave no sign, but, unconscious though he might have been of it, it was soothing to have the old mammie near, and to feel the sympathy with which she had so many times assuaged his child-grieves.

"I'se one mo' ebidence, chile," she resumed, pres-

ently, "an' yah mus' take it t' yah soul, cause it com from de great Book like, as if 't war writ fur dis sol-em 'casion. I war all in de valley ob triblation, when in com my ole Tony, lookin all sort ob 'spired, an he say, so cheery-like, 'Come, do n't gib up de ship til yah's got more reason den earthly tellin,' an he jes fetched de big Book, wot she gabe us her bressed self las' Christmast, an he say, my Tony did, 'Now Ise open jes as de speret diction, an yah shet yah eyes an' indicate wid dis twig, a varse of scripture;' so we jes done it, Massr Grove, an' dese am de words de twig teched. 'An' he teched her han' *an de fever left her*: an' she arose an' ministered unto dem.' Now, now how is yah faith, honey dee?"

Chipie waited to hear no more: her room was dark, but groping her way to the west window, she sat down and leaned her head out, welcoming the breezes which came now and then across her hot cheeks; they were few, for the air was dull and heavy; it had been raining all day, and had held up but a short time before; the night was black, and the only sound to be heard was the monotonous drip—drip—from the trees.

Doctor Francke's words had not stunned Chipie, as they had her sister and cousins; already she felt the agony of the descending blow crushing her. The ticking of the hall clock struck upon her heart like a requiem, as she bowed her head upon the sill. "Can

it be," she breathed huskily, "that when morning comes, there will be no Kate? That the life so nobly planned will be no more! Oh, *God help us!*"

Suddenly, upon the still air, a sound rang out which brought Chipie to her feet, in dumb horror; it was like nothing she had ever heard or imagined: it was hellish. What was it, and from whence did it come? With beating heart Chipie strained her ears for a repetition. Hearing nothing, she was beginning to chide herself, ascribing the sound to the imagining of her over-wrought brain, when again came the cry. This time it seemed to hover over her very head, and shrill and unearthly as it was, it was rendered doubly demoniacal by a tremulous undertone which rose and fell with a strange significance.

Chipie grasped the back of her chair for support, and, brave girl as she was, shook as if ague had seized her. In the midst of it came the memory of Nora Aleen, old Irish nurse in her grandmother's family. How she had laughed at the wild tales of banshees which Nora had declared herself knowing to! But alas! she had laughed in ignorance;—Nora was right —there were banshees.

In the silence which followed, Chipie succeeded in calming herself sufficiently to walk. In the lower hall she met Violet coming from the *sans-souci*, and motioning her to wait, she whispered:

"Violet, did you hear a strange noise, a few minutes ago?"

"Bress yah, honey-chile, yah wan't no wys scared, was yah? Dat wus a screech-owl."

A screech-owl! So this was the cry which Kate had tried to describe, Chipie now remembered, some weeks before; it was one evening when the wind and rain had been raging in a gruesome way, and Kate had exclaimed, "We need but one thing to make the dreariness complete, and that is, the cry of a screech-owl." Chipie had then wished that one would present itself, that she might experience the sensation which Kate spoke of; but she had felt it effectually now, and she sank upon the stairs to recover herself. How long she had been there she didn't know, when she heard Kate's door open, and quick, low words pass between her aunt and doctor Francke. It had come! The family were about to be summoned! Chipie felt that she couldn't meet the message alone; she must be near some one; she threaded her way, in a panic, to where Grove was lying, and seated herself beside him.

A swift step sped through the hall, and Mrs. Sturges came in; but Chipie, unable to meet her aunt's look, kept her head down.

"My children, our Kate will live:—a change is come!"

With a cry, Grove sprang to his feet, and then dropped back, while the lines of grief slowly relaxed.

Through the long, weary days, strength had never once forsaken Mrs. Sturgis, but now she buried her face in her hands, and wept unrestrainedly. Chipie waited a moment, and then thinking that her aunt would prefer being alone, she hurried up stairs to Madge, whom she found asleep with the tears still wet upon her face. She woke her, and then fell into hysterics. Madge raised herself upon one elbow, and stared at Chipie, in alarm, but, finally, she realized what the incoherent utterances meant, and her countenance grew serene: she said not a word, but with a long-drawn sigh, arose, walked to her dressing-case, and taking out a new box of hair-pins, began doing up her crimps—a solemn rite which she had never failed to observe until this day, when sorrow had gained the ascendancy over vanity, and the pretty front locks had been allowed to wave as they would.

Physical relief had not yet come to the watchers, although the lightened spirits imparted new strength for the constant care,—as necessary now as before. The girls had ample opportunity for showing their devotion to Kate, by the numberless attentions required by a convalescent. Chipie, especially, was untiring in her vigilance, and Mrs. Sturgis had reason to bless her again and again for her persistence in remaining.

CHAPTER XV.

"MISS MARGRAVE, I'm glad to find you enjoying this fine air! I hope you have found it as invigorating as I have, in my walk from General Winthrop's, for I'm sure you need it sadly."

"Thank you, Mr. Erskine, it is elixir," responded Chipie, who had left Kate's room five minutes before, and had come out for the first time that day, for a taste of out door sunshine. "I've been imbibing it with as much rapture as I imagine the ancients did their golden water, and with quite as marvellous an effect too."

"But you look tired still;" and Mr. Erskine gave Chipie an earnest look of inquiry.

"Do I? I'm afraid it's only stupidity, Mr. Erskine. I've been keeping myself a prisoner, to-day."

"So I supposed; and I'm sure that you can tell me, better than anyone else, how Miss Kate is, this afternoon."

"Getting on famously," answered Chipie. "Isn't it delightful? I feel quite uplifted at my success as a nurse. I actually tempted her into one of her own merry laughs, this morning, and she listened to reading for three whole hours without fatigue. But I forgot! I'm talking directly under her open windows, and she has just fallen asleep. You will come in, Mr. Erskine?"

"Thank you, but not if you will come out! Won't you get your hat and take a walk through the dell? I'm sure it will refresh you!"

"And so am I. I shall be delighted to go," was the frank reply. "I won't keep you waiting three minutes."

She appeared almost immediately, and with keen pleasure written on both their faces, the two started off in the direction of the woods.

"I've been looking wistfully over towards those cool pines, this afternoon," said Chipie, "and I'd half made up my mind for a ramble amongst them, all by myself, just as you came. I couldn't find anyone in the house to join me. I think Grove must have been shut up in the library, letter writing—I noticed that the door was closed—and Madge has gone to drive with Mr. Godfrey and the children."

"Yes, I met them on my way over. I believe that Mr. Winthrop and Mr. Carl were waiting to join them: Mr. Winthrop has a new dog-cart which he takes out, to-day for the first time. But Miss Margrave," he added, again noticing the tired look on Chipie's face, "I think you must be a very devoted nurse! What do you find to interest Miss Kate through the long days? Little Winny gave me a glowing description of your admirable success in that direction, yesterday."

"Well, I read, and talk a great deal of nonsense chiefly," answered Chipie. "And oh, here is something which will specially brighten Kate," she exclaimed stooping down. "These lovely bell-flowers! She was longing for some of them, this morning, and wondering if they were come, yet."

"Mr. Winthrop had a fine basket of flowers which he intended to leave for Miss Kate, this afternoon," observed Mr. Erskine as he stooped to help Chipie.

"Yes, he sends them, or brings them every day, but those are hot-house flowers, and beautiful as they are, Kate doesn't get much comfort from them; she chafes at the wire stems and pine sticks, and says that they aren't true flowers."

"Doubtless she feels that the poet had something different in mind, when he sung of 'A Withered Bouquet,'" laughed Mr. Erskine. "I ran across some curious white blossoms, a few days ago," he added,

"when fishing with Donald, and I wondered then, if Miss Kate would care for them; if you think she would, it would give me pleasure to get them—only, Miss Margrave, you will promise to be charitable if the arrangement lacks grace?"

"If it does n't hint at a wire or pine stick, it is sure to receive a hearty welcome, Mr. Erskine," said Chipie, anticipating, for some reason, an artistic treat for her cousin, in the promised bouquet. Such was the change which had been going on in Chipie's mind during these last weeks: her feeling of hostility had very nearly vanished, and only upon rare occasions did the old spirit of antagonism move her: since Kate's illness, a mutual appreciation of each other had grown up, and in the many earnest talks which had taken place, the deeper natures of both had been irresistibly attracted.

Chipie was on the point of remarking upon the prettiness of the path which her companion had chosen, when she saw to her dismay, that it was one which led directly to "Mermaid Pool," as Grove had christened the scene of her woe; frequented as the woods had been all summer, the place had been successfully avoided, although upon two or three occasions, it had been necessary to resort to stratagem. The whole affair had worked upon Chipie, until the thought of exposure had become nothing less than

appalling ; the more she saw of Mr. Erskine's calm, fastidious nature, the more confident she became that he would never excuse such an exhibition of childish folly and temper ; she could not brook the idea of his pity and scorn, and so it was with a quick gesture of impatience that she exclaimed :

"Mr. Erskine, I do n't like this path ; the narrow one on the left is altogether pleasanter ; it leads to that pretty spot which we call Winny's grotto."

"Then let us take it, by all means," was the quiet response. "I rather like this, myself, but perhaps it is because I most often find myself in it, in my quiet strolls—my meditative rambles !"

Chipie's heart gave a jump. "Then he is familiar with the place," she breathed. She glanced up furtively, but the calm face disarmed her of suspicion.

"Do you like it so much better than any of the others ?" she asked carelessly.

"Yes, I've come to feel a great regard for it, of late. It is a grand place to do one's life-planning in ; see what noble sentinels those pines on either side make ! 'T would be impossible to form narrow, crippled ideas in a spot like this ! 'T is a boon to we city-folk ! "

"If only one could retain the inspirations which come to one under the influences of nature and solitude, Mr. Erskine," said Chipie, impulsively. "But it is humiliating to find how entirely they fade away,

when one steps back into the midst of things and people ; at least, they do with me ! Solitude flatters terribly, I believe ! ”

“ How, please ? ” was the quiet interrogation.”

“ She suggests to egotistic, little mortals, such wondrous possibilities for growth and development ! ” answered Chipie. “ One passes from under her serene tutelage, with the most delusive hopes, simply to find that the subtle flattery by which one has been led into a blissful state of self-confidence, is but a means which Dame Solitude takes to entertain her guests. I’m beginning to lose all faith in her friendship.”

Chipie gave a short laugh, but there was no doubt about the seriousness of her words.

Mr. Erskine did ’nt reply immediately, but when he did, it was in a peculiarly winning tone.

“ I would n’t do that, if I were you ! I think that anyone who truly desires her friendship, will find her a loyal friend ! ’T is my faith that whatever of good or greatness, solitude may unfold to her guests, the same may be accomplished by, and betome a part of, that guest, if so ’t is willed ! ”

He seemed about to add more, but checked himself. Chipie wished that he would n’t stop ; she was tired and not in her usual conversational mood, and she wanted to be talked to ; but Mr. Erskine, also, was more taciturn than was his wont. Suddenly he

seemed to remember that he was not doing his part towards making the walk one of refreshment to his companion, and instantly the serious humor was gone.

His life experiences had been deep and varied, and from extensive travel he had gathered a rich and valuable harvest, which he generously shared with all who were fortunate enough to be his friends. But his gaiety was ever tinged by an indescribable something,—Chipie had tried in vain to discover what,—betokening the great depths of his nature, which held life to be far too serious and grand to permit a complete abandonment to jocularity, at any time. Not that he was in any degree sombre; on the contrary, he diffused a glow wherever he went, young and old alike recognizing his power.

By the time that the two had emerged from the woods, upon the pebbly beach, bordering the lake, Chipie's vivacity had returned, and both were ready to enjoy to the full, the scene before them.

The wane of the afternoon had already declared itself by the sombre light which struck through the trees, making long paths of bronze, as it gleamed on the pine needles beneath. The lake in its iridescent splendor was only rivalled by the crimson and gold of the vault above, upon which the hand of the Great Master was blending and contrasting the marvel of tints and colors, until the very tree-tops trembled and glowed in their adoration of the mighty power.

Here, in the midst of it all, Mr. Erskine and Chipie sat down, and tried to drink in the glory. They said little, but each was content with the silence. Along the banks, the golden rays lingered tenderly amongst the tall trees, as if loth to forsake friends so tried and true, and the feathery-topped pines waved ecstatically as they received the warm kiss of the departing beam.

For more than an hour Chipie and Mr. Erskine sat watching the glory, and finally, when it had paled and faded, they arose and turned their steps homeward; neither seemed inclined to talk, as they walked slowly along the narrow beach, and conventionality had so far ceased between them, that they made no effort to assume a mood out of harmony.

As they reached the brow of the hill, a low murmur was borne across the orchard, and they paused to catch the musical rhythm of the old cabin songs.

"Oh, Mr. Erskine," Chipie exclaimed, in pleased surprise, "if you have n't heard uncle Malcolm's people sing, do stop a moment and listen. It is so weird, and this is the first time I've heard them since Kate's illness."

A few steps higher up, brought the dusky group into sight. Tony, with his venerable head thrown back, stood waving his baton—Violet's sunshade—in true leadership fashion, as he sent forth his deep bass notes with heart-stirring fervor, while Vio-

let, with arms folded across her majestic figure, soared away on the soprano, introducing grace-notes with perfect abandon; the others were scattered about in lazy attitudes, but all seemed to enter with equal soul into the chorus of what appeared to the listeners, to be a song of thanksgiving;—simple enough, as to the words, but sung with a pathos which rendered it more than touching.

“ O, Lord, O good Lord, O dee Lord,
 We tank de heaps, O Lord!
 Our lamb, our precious lamb am saved,
 We tank dee heaps, O Lord!

One after another the quaint melodies floated on the evening air, and finally, with one accord, burst forth the song, so familiar—yet ever new in its pathetic yearning :—

“ The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
 ‘Tis summer, the darkies are gay;
 The corn-top’s ripe and the meadows in the bloom,
 While the birds make music all the day.”

The entire piece was given with the thrilling cadence which can come only from those who know of what they sing—and more than one of the mournful-eyed group had passed from under the scourge—and they sang the closing verse with an intensity undiminished by time and freedom :—

"The head must bow, and the back will have to bend,
Wherever the darkey may go;
A few more days, and the trouble all will end
In the field where the sugar-canies grow.
A few more days for to tote the weary load,
No matter, 't will never be light,
A few more days till we totter on the road,
Then my old Kentucky home,—Good Night!"

The solemnity of the moment was disturbed at this point, by Princess who, having attacked the chorus with a gusto quite incompatible with Tony's ideas of propriety, was set upon, and the baton applied so lustily about her ears, that with amazing dexterity she vanished, performing dizzy somersaults as she did so. Then Chipie noticed, as she and her companion turned away with an amused laugh, that the twilight shadows had closed about them.

Upon reaching the house, the sound of voices drew them to the balcony most remote from Kate's room, where they found the young people having one of their twilight chats; for it had become a matter of course that Carl and the young men from Wildwood should walk over to Chavenage every evening. Jerrold was sitting a little apart from the rest, looking grim and stern, as usual; he was caring Major, trying to win one of the affectionate glances that Kate received so freely, but Major had never regarded Jerrold with much favor, and sub-

mitted to his overtures with side-long glances. It was only by dint of coaxing that Major could be gotten away from Kate's door, for since the accident he had taken his place there, and had grown thin in his faithful watch. Mr. Erskine placed a chair for Chipie, where the cool breezes would reach her, and as she seated herself, Grove asked :

" Chipie, into what undiscoverable loophole did you so mysteriously disappear, this afternoon? I hunted for you in all directions, inquired for you in all quarters, swept half a dozen unfinished letters into my drawer, and all because I felt that you needed a good draught of out-door air."

" Yes, Miss Chipie," put in Carl, " we had together one grand race after you. We thought to take you an extended drive through the charming park, and we were greatly embarrassed not to find you."

" If you had come at the right moment you would have found me on the piazza, pining to be taken somewhere; but instead, Mr. Erskine came. I had a beautiful walk and am thoroughly refreshed. Grove, has Kate waked, do you know?"

" Yes, I've just come from her room, and I know some one she would like to see for a moment."

" Then I will find out whom it is, if my friends will excuse me," said Chipie, with a smile, as she got up to go. She was closing the door behind her when Jerrold's voice arrested her.

"Beg pardon, Miss Margrave," he said, approaching her, "but will you convey my solicitous regards to your cousin?"

"Certainly, Mr. Winthrop," answered Chipie, vexed at Jerrold's look and tone, which expressed far more than Chipie thought they had a right to express.

"I do not wish to annoy your cousin, Miss Margrave, by my solicitude upon her behalf," continued Jerrold, "but"—

"O, I am sure yon are very thoughtful, and my cousin will feel obliged to you, Mr. Winthrop," broke in Chipie, not caring to wait for Jerrold's sentence to be finished, knowing well enough how it would end; for Jerrold had a habit of waylaying her to and from Kate's room, with some prolix message or inquiry, and she was growing tired of it; she had tried snubbing, upon several occasions, but Jerrold was not to be snubbed.

Kate looked up eagerly, as Chipie entered, and said, with the old ring of brightness in her voice:

"I'm so glad that you've been walking, dear; you needed it so much, for you are just wearing yourself to a thread-paper, caring for that selfish cousin of yours. Oh dear, will she ever get well, and be able to show her gratitude for all the kindness showered upon her by everybody! But has your stroll done you good, and were the woods lovely?"

"Yes, but how did you know I had been to the woods?" asked Chipie.

"Princess saw you," smiled Kate. "What part were you in?" she continued wistfully, the thought of her old haunts making her homesick for news of them.

A comical look passed over Chipie's face, and she answered:

"We took the bridle-path around by the gorge, and came home by the beach; and the sunset was wonderful, Kate."

She broke off abruptly, and presently, with a quick laugh more of nervousness than of mirth, went to the bedside, and looking down, said—

"Kate, do you think it is at all deceitful in me to hide that absurd affair of mine, from our friends?"

"Deceitful?" interrogated Kate; "how do you mean?"

"I mean, am I false in giving our new friends the impression that I am half way sensible, when in reality I am such a goose? Kate, I've never said anything about it, but you don't know the mortification that that thing has been to me! My face burns with shame every time I think of it, and I feel like such a sneak trying to avoid that hateful place when we are in the woods!"

This was the first allusion that Chipie had made to her catastrophe, and Kate understood what had prompted it.

"Do I think you deceitful? False? Why no; certainly there is no reason why you should proclaim it, unless, indeed, you feel that some explanation is due to Mr. Erskine!" Kate kept her face turned away, as she spoke. "He evidently thinks Miss Margrave flawless, and your conscientious spirit may shrink from the misplaced confidence!"

"Now Kate Sturgis, say farewell to further pampering from me; you are getting well quite too fast, and are resuming your bad ways with an ease not at all to my fancy. You know that Mr. Erskine is the very person of all others that I would not betray myself to! I don't care anything about the others, but he would be so shocked."—

"But he would soon recover," laughed Kate.

"No, he would never recover," replied Chipie, decisively. "He would never think of me without pity and contempt. I know exactly how he would be affected! These self-controlled characters never make allowances for anything of that kind, you know!"

"Then why trouble yourself any more about it? Let the matter die out of your memory; it isn't worth making so much of; you are quite too sensitive about it, dear. But speaking of Mr. Erskine, is he as nice as ever?"

"He is much nicer, Kate; or perhaps I should say, that I see him as he is, now. I acknowledge that prejudice blinded me at first."

She said no more, but busied herself in drawing back the curtains, opening the shutters, and making things generally comfortable. But her confession was enough for Kate, at present, and she fell into a soliloquy. With pleasure she took up the thread of the pretty romance which she had begun weaving weeks before, when with growing interest, she had watched the unconscious personages of her little plot, and now she was curious to know what had been going on during her weeks of seclusion. She admired Mr. Erskine, while for Chipie she felt an enthusiastic love, believing her capable of any amount of good, and possessed of noble possibilities, which only required some strong motive power, to bring them out. Chipie was a success in her society life; not that she thoroughly enjoyed it, for, while she extracted much real pleasure from it, she believed that a broader, truer field for growth lay somewhere beyond,—where, she didn't quite know,—and, though no one guessed it, the thought kept her unsettled and dissatisfied. Kate's example had moved her deeply, and now the summer had brought another witness to the desirableness of a life with an object—a life beyond fashion and self; and how meagre the old existence was in comparison would only be realized when the time should come for returning to it.

CHAPTER XVI.

A week later, Kate left her room for the first time. Grove led her triumphantly into the breakfast-room, amidst a clamor of rejoicings, and seated her in her old place at the table. Carl found the English language inadequate for the occasion, and resorted to his native tongue for congratulatory expressions, which he poured out volubly.

After breakfast, Kate was first conducted to her studio, which she had been longing to get into, and stepping up to the easel, she was about to raise the cloth which draped it, when her palette met her eye ; she caught it up and stroked it softly with her hand—the bit of polished wood was very dear to her.

“ Has anyone been here since my illness, mamma ? ” she asked, as she lifted the cloth from the canvas.

"Not until this morning, dear, when I opened it to let in the air, for your reception," answered Mrs. Sturgis, participating in the amusement with which the others were watching Kate's movements.

"We've not even stolen a glance at the portrait, my sisterine!" said Grove, and he gave an exclamation of surprise as the covering was wholly withdrawn. Well might Kate have felt proud of her success, and Chipie certainly had no reason for displeasure as she looked upon the picture before her. The reds, yellows and greens which had dismayed her in the first paintings, now showed their value in the depth and transparency which they had given.

"What a dear little thing you were, Kate, to make me look like that," whispered Chipie. "Privately, you have idealized your cream-colored cousin, wonderfully, but we won't hint it to anybody, for the world. I'm glad you did!"

Kate laughed, and shook her head energetically, and then listened to what the others were saying of it. Kate had put her best work into the picture, and in the last painting, she declared that she had worked by inspiration; and indeed, the portrait acknowledged as much.

The clear, olive tints of the complexion were exquisite, while the best and truest in Chipie's face had been successfully caught and depicted. The piquant

face, charming in itself, had the merit of being a beautiful likeness of Chipie, in her finest mood.

Mr. Erskine didn't see it till some days later, and then Kate was disappointed that he seemed so little impressed; she had particularly hoped that he would like it very much. But after studying it for some time, his only expression of commendation was, "Miss Kate, it is a good portrait."

The next day, however, she was more than satisfied, when he begged her permission to visit the studio alone: and when he came to thank her, his face wore a look which she had never seen there before, as, taking her hand, he said earnestly:

"Miss Kate, I sincerely congratulate you upon your success. The picture is beautiful, and truthfully painted!"

Mr. Erskine's "three weeks" had lengthened into as many months, and still he gave no sign of saying farewell. Chipie wondered what excuse he had sent to his sister, for disappointing her in the promised visit, of which he had told her weeks before.

Sunday morning,—the first Sunday after Kate's recovery,—as they were all arranging themselves in the carriages for their drive to church, Jerrold, and Walter Godfrey drove up and stopped for a moment to exchange greetings.

"Mr. Erskine declined accompanying us, this

morning," said Walter, " he preferred a solitary ride on that horse of his. However, I think you will see him at church. By the by," he added, " do you know how near we came to losing him, yesterday!"

" What do you mean? " asked Grove, quickly.

" Why, he received a letter, calling him home immediately, upon some business matter ; and after leaving good-by messages for everyone, he had gotten as far on his way as the Wilmingham dépôt, when a telegram met him, saying that everything was all right and his return unnecessary."

Although Chipie's eyes were upon her uncle, as he stooped to pick her the *mignonnette* which she had asked, she heard every word that had been said, and for some reason, everything seemed to her singularly fresh and bright, as the horses started off. But then, the drive to church would have accounted for that ;—it was certainly lovely enough, as it wound, for two or three miles, through the wild old park, keeping close to the banks of the Sudbury river ;—a revelation of Nature's full heart, showing here, an entrancing glimpse, and there, an unobstructed view of the serpentine stream. An æsthetic eye, indeed, had planned this continuous feast of loveliness, seeking out the points where a thinning of the trees would disclose the most picturesque effects of the landscape beyond ! Even the red roofs of the mills, boldly outlined afar down the river, over-

hung by drooping elms, lent a pleasing feature, and the grand forest trees on all sides, formed a tempting trysting for the silver-throated thrushes. Here and there, a maple on the river-brink, grown vain by reason of the charming reflection which, all summer, it had gazed upon, was beginning to show its conscious pleasure by the glowing blushes which crimsoned its branches; but pretty as was the dash of color against the varied greens, it carried a moment's heart-throb to at least one of the party. To Chipie it was a messenger telling that the summer was far spent, and would soon abdicate in favor of the fleeting autumn when the freedom of Liberty Hall would be ended. It was n't a pleasant reminder, and when the old stone church was finally reached, Mrs. Sturgis noticed the thoughtful brow and wondered as to the cause. Perhaps Chipie saw the question in her aunt's eyes, for she said in a low tone, as she alighted;

“Auntie, you need n't be afraid to have me sit next to Grove, this morning! I am just as good and religious as I can be, and really dote upon hearing your good rector's melancholy discourse.”

“Then I may feel quite safe, in my corner?”

“Yes, aunt Paulien, quite.”

And so Chipie believed, as she seated herself, little guessing the snare close at hand, ready to entrap her boasted sobriety! Not that she was irreverent—far

from it—but it must be owned that she could not look at Widow Jason in her great poke bonnet, making spasmodic efforts to dislodge from its depths a pair of the gleesome wasps, which not infrequently buzzed in through the open windows, and feel that it was a part of the sacred service ; nor was she always able to look unruffled when the usher's precocious infant, sitting astride the pew-back, would electrify dozing Miss Dawson by suddenly dropping a prayer-book upon her head. These little *contre-temps* were not uncommon, although the general air pervading the congregation was extremely decorous. Upon the previous Sabbath, at vesper, Chipie had seen a horn-bug fasten itself upon the end of Dr. Bancroft's nose ; in relating the incident, the following morning, she had spoken of the unhappy victim as "that long-nosed Dr. Bancroft." Grove and Kate attempted to refute her right to the epithet, but Chipie was invincible, and to-day, while she listened to the sermon, she *looked* at the doctor's nose. Grove observing the direction of her eyes, wickedly leaned over and whispered,—

" Well, how is it ? "

Presently a slip of paper was placed in the hymn-book, and delicately traced in pencil, Grove saw,—

" I understand, now ; the *nose* is short, but it is *put on long !*"

And here it was that Chipie's temptation, or, as she told herself, her retribution came.

The audience had hardly seated itself, after the opening hymn, when a belated young woman entered the pew in front of Chipie, and—oh, grief of griefs,—caught a pendant, attached to one of her many bangles, in the tenderly cared-for wig of an old gentleman seated in front, causing that unfortunate accessory to fly off, disclosing a shiny, pink head, such as Chipie had not known existed. With protruding eyes, the little man threw up his hands and gazed about in bewilderment, while the alarmed girl endeavored to disentangle the hair; but fright lent no cunning to the trembling fingers, and with a despairing look towards the stern visaged woman next her, she held out her arm imploringly; it was violently seized, the hair snapped remorselessly away, and rising, the irate female pulled the wig over the owner's bare head, caring little that she got it askew, and adding agony to misery by trailing her cruel cuff-pin across the fated man's cheek. With both hands and one foot simultaneously raised, a word was uttered which may not be repeated, in that the offender was a pious man and had not before so fallen from grace.

It all happened like a flash, but Chipie's appreciation of the scene was evident. It was some time before she succeeded in calming herself sufficiently to lift her eyes, and then she met those of Mr. Erskine full upon her. The latter occupied a transept pew, and Chipie saw that a pillar had prevented him from

seeing the cause of her amusement, while the amusement itself had been only too visible. She was annoyed and felt a flush coming into her cheeks.

"It is too bad!" she said to herself, resentfully. "What will he think of me—and after what we were saying yesterday! He will think me irreverent and—well, no matter, it will only be another phase of my character! It is immaterial, of course, what he thinks!"

She tried to concentrate her thoughts upon the sermon, but they would wander in spite of herself.—"What would Mr. Erskine think of her frivolous conduct?"

When church was over, Mr. Erskine came to the carriage to exchange greetings, and Chipie fancied that he looked at her reprovingly; certainly he did not have less than usual to say to her, and addressed his remarks chiefly to Mrs. Sturgis and Kate.

On the way home, Kate stopped at old Mrs. Benson's, to tell her of the sermon, for rheumatism had prevented the old couple from church-going for many years, and these weekly visits from Kate, so full of cheer and freshness, were the brightest spots in their lives.

"I do declare," cried Mrs. Benson, opening the door as Kate advanced, "ef it aint a sight jest ter see you a walkin into this old place agin! I would n't

a thought me and Ebenezar would a missed anything as we hev the sight o' your sunny face all this time. Ebenezar, he says, 'Sunday aint Sunday 'thout a sight o' Miss Katriny,' an' I guess he's about right."

Kate stepped into the best room with its sanded floor, and sat down in the little dimity rocker by the open window, through which came the drowsy hum of the bees revelling in the tangled bed of dear old-fashioned flowers beneath the window. With pleased faces the two old people seated themselves opposite, while Kate ran on from one subject to another most interesting to her listeners; afterwards giving ear to the pathetic stories of chickens devoured by the pig, fever-stricken bird, and rheumatism in all its phases. She was an indulgent listener, and nothing delighted her protégés more than to have her exhibit an interest in their reminiscences of Saxony and the neighboring towns, and Mr. Benson never failed to make the most of his opportunities.

"'Pears to me,'" he said, as Kate made a motion to go, "'you're hevin lively times up to the house, once more! Seems to me that 'ere boarder down to old Mis' Leman's is a staying on pretty well, too! They say, down to the village, that he's a big man down South where he was bringed up;—writ a consider'ble many books, so they say;—I do n't know nuthin about it myself, but that's the story."

"I was tellin' Ebenezar," put in Mrs. Benson, feeling that her husband's curiosity was getting the better of him, "that the sight o' so many young people a goin' by, carries me right back sixty years ago, when I was a gal. Things hev changed wonderful since then! Why, I kin remember when there was a dozen or more young people livin' right round here 'thin a mile o' each other, and now Thomas Elkins an' me an' Ebenezar be the only ones a livin'. Sech times as we used to hev too! Why, Miss Katriny, we did n't think nuthin o' walkin to Dixbury to singin'-school, every Saturday night, an' reglar Thanksgivin' night we'd all go over in a pung to Sudbury to the ball at Wayside Inn, and not git home till three o'clock in the morning. They was beautiful balls, so pretty an' s'lect! Nobody need n't hev been ashamed of 'em. I s'pose you've taken your compiny over to the old place afore now! City folks mostly likes to see them sort of places, though fur my part I'd ruther see a nice pretty cottage, painted and blinded. There's been some potry writ about that old tavern, by a perfesser down near Boston, so they say."

"So they say!" repeated Mr. Benson, indignantly. "There's no 'so they say' about it. I see the book with it in, with my own eyes, up to 'Squire Burton's, four or five years ago, and the 'Squire told me 't was all about that very 'Sudbury Inn. But all I say is,

that 'twould a showed more *potry* ef the perfesser—or whatever he was—had took 'Squire Burton's house there, with its *cupolo* and gold turkey-cock, and made up something about that!"

"Well, we had n't oughter grumble, Mr. Benson, it's all fur the best, I make no doubt, and we've hed some fine times in the old hall!"

"Yes, they was good old days," exclaimed Mr. Benson, with a retrospective smile; "good old days! I was courtin' Mis' Benson here, then. I rec'lect my mother was blind, and 'long about that time I used to wear a posy a good deal o' the time when I went up evenins to see Mis' Benson here, and oncenet in a while I'd kinder forget to take the posy out afore I got home; and the old lady she did n't know nuthin about my courtin' Mis' Benson, and she'd say, if she got a smell of the posy, 'Look a here, son Ebenezar, be you a courtin' anybody 'thout lettin me know on't?' an I jest took fun in plaguin' her that way."

The old man's eyes glistened as the present faded away, and he found himself back in his youth with its little romance; Kate respected the silence, and in a minute he continued, his look dreamy and far away: "Yes, a good woman was my old mother—a *good woman!* And oh, how I did *love* (Kate waited with sympathetic face)—to see that woman—*cat cucumbers!*"

"Ebenezar, you're a makin Mis' Katriny laugh ; I see it in her eyes ! You see," she exclaimed, turning to Kate, "he used to give her cucumbers, to the table, and afore she'd hev em all eat up, he'd jest put some more into her dish 'thout sayin a word, and she'd keep on a eatin and a eatin, and at last she'd say, all so innocent—poor blind soul—‘Son Ebenezar, I never see anything last as this dish of cucumbers does, and it seems a shaller little dish too !’ That used to please Mr. Benson the best kind."

With a merry laugh, Kate made a second movement to go, and after a few last words, started for home. Mrs. Benson's allusions to the Wayside Inn had reminded her that the famous old place had been overlooked in their jaunting-plans, and as some of their number had never seen the place, she proposed, the next morning, that they should make up a horse-back party to visit it. The September air had already enough of the glow and sparkle to make such an excursion delightful, and therefore it was with much animation that the proposal was received, and the next Thursday decided upon, for its realization.

CHAPTER XVII.

PROVIDENCE is not always to be depended upon in the matter of weather, when picnicing is in vogue. But upon the day of the "equitation," as Jerrold was pleased to term the riding jaunt, she came forward with unstinted munificence, flinging her favors about lavishly. The night preceding, a light rain had fallen, laying the dust and bringing out the fragrance from earth and shrub, making the morning an idyl.

The Inn was a good two hours' ride from Saxony, and an early start had been decided upon in order to avoid the mid-day heat. Miss Darcy, an old school-friend of Kate, who was on a short visit to an aunt in Saxony, had been invited to join the party, and Chipie had given up for her use the horse which she had been riding all summer, taking instead, a Kentucky

thorough-bred of General Winthrop's, which he had placed at her service. The animal, though well trained to the saddle, was nervous and high-spirited, and Chipie, fearless and much elated at being thought capable of managing him, would not exchange with anyone, although Mr. Erskine and Grove both expressed uneasiness.

Jerrold seemed unusually excited, this morning, and pranced about watchfully, keeping as near Kate as he could, fearful lest he should be allotted a partner other than herself. But he had no cause for anxiety, for, Kate's position as hostess obliging her to consider herself last, she had no thought of inflicting Jerrold upon anyone less tolerant of his eccentricities than herself; and so when it was unanimously voted that Kate should take the lead with Jerrold, the latter was triumphant.

Whatever else Jerrold lacked, he was indisputably a fine rider, and sat his horse as if moulded with it from bronze; indeed, he suggested the comparison strongly, as seated on the high-stepping chestnut, he bent his haughty, dark face towards Kate, to inquire which side she preferred him to take. They were well-matched riders; for in Kate's veins tingled the blood of grandmothers skilled in the chase from which, time and again, they had borne the cherished brush. She had on a dark English habit, and as Jer-

rold watched the face so full of enjoyment, he *thought* what Chipie was saying to Mr. Erskine, as they rode through the gate-way, "Isn't Kate superb, this morning?"

Grove and Miss Darcy brought up the rear, while Carl ambled about at his own sweet will; Grove had proposed finding him a partner, but he had frantically declined:—

"Eh, please, no! I would have no spirit without the sharity and good heart of Liberty Hall, to survey my embarrassment. I could not wish to have derision cast at me by unsympathetic souls when I should cease to race together with you, while I would regain composure!"

The road to the tavern was pretty and woody enough, but the historic associations which clung about it, made it charming to romantic young souls who discovered many an attraction not observable to the more prosaic wayfarer.

"Only think," Madge exclaimed to Walter Godfrey, "this is the very road over which Paul Revere took his midnight ride! And see that tumble-down house nestled amongst the woodbine! Of course he stopped there, to tell his news! Can't you see the poor, frightened inmates, Mr. Godfrey, crowding about that bit of a window, and drinking in every word that fell from his lips?"

Walter answered with equal enthusiasm, that he could, and then rode up to find the door, which was not visible from the road.

"Please bring me a spray of that woodbine, Mr. Godfrey," Madge called, "and get one for yourself!"

"If I were you, Madge," laughed Grove, as he came up in time to catch her request, "I wouldn't waste too much feeling on that shanty; it is only an old pigsty belonging to a house which was burned a dozen years ago, just beyond: I dare say it was a very good pigsty, but you will find something more worthy of sentiment, further on!"

Madge looked piqued at the laugh which was raised, but elevating her nose, she answered, nonchalantly:

"Indeed! Well, I am sure I am glad that poor Paul was not obliged to make so insignificant a stop."

But notwithstanding this damper to her ardor, she continued to regard the passing objects with benignant expressions of interest; and when they finally entered the quaint old town of Sudbury, she not only grew excited over the dwellings of authentic antiquity, but, so deeply was she infused with the spell of the hour, allowed a few devoted glances to rest upon some fearfully new and economical abodes which had sprung up, lustrous in green and white paint, and stood looking out of place and uncomfortable in the midst of the time-honored homesteads.

Past the meadows, gleaming with sagittarius and blue lilies, the riders flew; then through a stretch of piny woods; and finally, a gambrel roof appeared, and the horses were drawn up beneath the great elm nearly opposite the faded mansion.

Carl, after a sweeping glance, settled himself in his saddle, and sat, the picture of dismay, scanning the bare, weather-beaten front.

"Carl, what's the trouble? Has your fancy received a shock?" asked Grove, laughing.

"Eh! Yes, yes!" assented Carl. "The thing is a barn, a most *meeserable* affair, with no charming allurements to enter! Where are the signs of romantic *hospitalitee*, which poetry pictured? Eh, my soul has received a false impression!"

"Mr. Van Wickbecker, I am afraid that you are slandering, said Mr. Erskine, joining in the laugh at Carl's air of scorn. "Isn't that an hospitable array of windows? I imagine that they have done their share, on the blustering winter nights, in sending out good cheer! But I see that the sign of the Red Horse has disappeared!"

"Yes, it is a shame that that should have been taken away," exclaimed Madge; "it would have given expression to the whole thing!"

"I am surprised to find it so large," observed Walter Godfrey.

"It wasn't as large, originally," replied Grove, "The wing on the left was a later addition. Miss Darcy, I hope that you aren't going to be contemptuous too," he continued, as he helped that young lady to dismount.

"Oh no, I am getting hardened to disappointments of this kind," laughed Miss Darcy, as she gave Grove her hand and sprang to the ground. "Besides," she added, "I never supposed that there was anything particularly romantic about the place."

"Now, Edith, do n't be practical," exclaimed Kate; "it is highly improper to be practical on occasions like this!"

"Then I won't give utterance to the remark I was about to make, Miss Kate," said Mr. Erskine, as, having dismounted Chipie, he led the two horses into an open field, near by, where they were made safe and comfortable; by the time that the others had followed his example, the girls had converted their riding skirts into walking skirts, and the inspection of the interior began.

The battered front door, with its green paint worn to a neutral, opened into a large hall, with a swinging gate on one side, and an outside door at the end. The first room on the right, at the foot of the stairs, made even Carl's face light up with interest, for while standing in the rough-hewn bar-room, it was easy to

forget that the old Colonial days had fled ; the bar, in one corner, extending almost to the rafters, seemed still reeking with the odor of the hot punches, etc., which had penetrated its timber, and suggested but too plainly the carousals which it had instigated. The immense fireplace told of the generous cheer which it had been wont to shed upon its worshippers, though now it looked sad and gloomy, as if the memory of the past weighed heavily upon it.

“ Notice this rugged old cross-beam,” said Grove, hitting the low beam with his riding cane ; “ it looks like a satiated old sinner, does n’t it ? I ’ll warrant that it has vibrated with many a wild tale of murder and ghost ! Jove ! I feel the vibration in my cane.”

“ Oh, come ; do n’t stay in this room any longer,” exclaimed Madge ; “ it is a dreadful place—everything is so mysterious and uncanny ! ”

“ This will be more to Madge’s taste,” said Kate as she led the way across the hall into a large room with high wainscoting, and low ceiling with a grey cross-beam.

“ Ah, I recognize this apartment, I think,” observed Mr. Erskine, looking about curiously. “ Was n’t it here that we were entertained by the Sicilian, the Musician and the Poet ? That fireplace certainly looks familiar ! ”

“ Yes, this is the very room,” answered Kate.

"I'm glad you have so good a memory, Mr. Erskine, and now if you look on the window panes, you will find Major Molineau's couplet, which is extremely edifying."

It took some time to examine the lower rooms, numerous and oddly irregular as they were; many of the open fireplaces had been closed up, and in some of the rooms they had been superseded by the most modern of stoves, an innovation rendered doubly painful by the high state of polish which they presented. However, they were treated with the scorn due them, and presently the modest bed-room of Lafayette was reached.

"I wonder if this floor deluded the old fellow into the belief that his feet were sinking into velvet," said Walter, as he pointed out the figures painted upon an orange ground.

"The probability is, that by the time he got up here, he was in a condition to believe any attempt at deception offered," remarked Grove, with a twinkle.

"You sha n't hint such a dreadful thing about that great, generous man," cried Winny, reproachfully, unwilling that her hero should suffer calumny.

"But he was only mortal, after all, you know!" said Grove, smiling at the excited little face. "And the landlord who was caged in behind that bar, was really a sort of a siren, although disguised in the un-

couth habiliments of a very mortal man ; so you see, your hero could n't help himself!"

"Grove Sturgis, I think that it is real wicked for you to say such things about that splendid Lafayette ! He never even *looked* into that horrid room, I know ! Now say that you were just funning, and that you don't believe a word of what you hinted ! If you do n't, I wo n't speak to you again, to-day."

"Oh, if you are going to avenge yourself in that cruel fashion, little champion, of course, I must retract, and tell you candidly that I imagine Lafayette never even knew that the despised room existed."

"What ! do you mean that he was never here at all ?" cried Winny, rushing upon her cousin with her small whip.

"No, no ; not that," exclaimed Grove, in mock fright ; "I mean that he probably passed by the wicked door, so engrossed in his mighty thoughts that the sound of the carousals within, merely swept his ear as the distant echo of the bugle. And now, little one, we will step into the old hall and have a pirouette ; you can imagine me Lafayette, you know !"

Grove made a courtly bow, and then the two whirled away, being presently joined by the others. After this, the investigations went on, and not even the great attic, with its mammoth chimneys, was overlooked ; it was there, in a corner, partitioned off, that

the unruly visitants of the bar-room were harbored. Rickety doors, sunken floors, and break-neck stairways abounded, in the main part of the house, and did much in doing away with the unpleasant effect produced by the clean stoves. Finally, the last of the seven outside doors was opened and shut, and the explorers found themselves once more beneath the spreading elms, with the sunshine dispelling the musty effluvium of the past, which seemed to have clung about them. Tony had arrived with the lunch, which after the long ride, was hailed with satisfaction; and the rest of the afternoon was spent in rambling about in the pretty woods close by.

Since dismounting, the time hadn't passed agreeably to Jerrold. He had found it impossible to secure Kate's company to himself, and he had been literally gnashing his teeth at the ill fate which had brought Miss Darcy amongst them; for Kate had devoted herself to her friend with a pertinacity so irritating to Jerrold, that his responses to Miss Darcy's remarks were barely civil.

"What a bearish young fellow that Mr. Winthrop is, Kate! How can you tolerate him!" Miss Darcy had said, with no little annoyance, when Jerrold for the fourth time had moved away in despair from their vicinity. "I wonder," she added, "that so fine a looking man can be so disagreeable. What are his redeemable qualities?"

"Oh, he has a number," replied Kate, thoughtfully. "In the first place, he is quite as valuable as *Webster's Unabridged*, and, if he pleases, he can make himself particularly entertaining in many ways; it is n't that he has so many more faults than other people, only those that he does possess are so very evident, and so very annoying."

Chipie and Mr. Erskine were to take the lead on the way back, a plan which accorded with Jerrold's wishes, as it would give him the opportunity which he had been striving after, to talk with Kate, undisturbed. But here again he was baffled; for just as he had placed himself in the line, beside Kate, Walter Godfrey rode up, and said, in a low tone:

"Winthrop, if Miss Kate will allow me, wo n't you let me take your place for a little while? I have something I want to say to her."

There was nothing left to do but to fall back into Walter's place beside Madge, which Jerrold did with a savage glance at his friend and a feeling of irritation towards Kate. Without waiting for preliminary remarks, Walter dashed at once into his subject, with youthful impetuosity.

"Miss Kate, I've got an immense confession to make, and I do n't know what you will think of it, but I love Madge, and have asked her to marry me, and she has promised that she will. I know that I ought

not to have spoken to her, until I had received permission, but I could n't help it," he exclaimed simply. "It all happened so naturally! You see, Miss Kate, I've loved Madge since the moment she smiled on me, on the hill, when I was fortunate enough to find her comb."

Kate was aware of the inexplicableness of love's divine afflatus, but she recalled Madge's appearance at the moment alluded to, and—wondered!

"Does my cousin Chipie know this, Mr. Godfrey?" Kate asked, as soon as the eager voice ceased speaking. She felt quite sure that she did not know it, and she was not slow in deciding as to the reason which had caused Madge to allow Walter to make his confession to herself in preference to Chipie.

"No, nothing has been said to Miss Chipie," Walter answers with a slight flush. "Perhaps this is a *second* faux-pas, but Madge and I agreed that it would n't be just the thing to keep it to ourselves all day, and Madge felt that it might be too much of a surprise to her sister to have it come upon her so suddenly."

Kate could n't prevent the little laugh which came at the thought of the consternation which she knew would overwhelm her unconscious cousin, upon hearing that Madge had presumed to act for herself, thus boldly, upon so important a matter; for it had not yet

come to her that her sister, just from school, could possibly be in danger of falling under Hymen's influence.

"Yes," Kate responded, presently, "Chipie will be surprised, I know; she hadn't an idea of it, and I,—well, I'm not as much surprised as I should be,—as everybody else will be, perhaps, but it is the last thing in the world that I should have anticipated, two months ago. Of course, you know, I have nothing to say about it,—it is nothing to do with me, and I——"

"But, Miss Kate, you won't say anything against it, when it comes to be talked over?" interrupted Walter, eagerly. "You see, we are afraid there'll be a row about it on account of our ages, and if you would only take our part it would be such an immense help! Do you believe there will be much of a time made?"

"I'm afraid that there will be, at first, Mr. Godfrey," Kate was obliged to acknowledge. "Uncle and auntie will be so bewildered, for they have made such a baby of Madge; and to think that it should have happened this summer too—this summer, in which we supposed nothing would happen,"—

"But it would have happened *soon*," interposed Walter. "Fellows could n't help falling in love with anyone so glorious as Madge, and no one could ever care for her as I do! I can't tell you anything about my feelings for Madge—it is no use to try—only if her

parents will let me, I am going to *work* and see what I can do to make myself worthy of her; a *rich* fellow can make as much of himself as a poor one, if he has something to spur him on, and I'm going to *do* it too!"

"Mr. Walter, you will,—I know you will—" said Kate, earnestly, as she looked at the strong, bright face, beside her. "I like you, and I will do my very best to make your path smooth; but," she added hastily, as she saw Jerrold approaching, "You will speak to Chipie, or rather, you will write to uncle Margrave, at once?"

"Yes, before I go to sleep, to-night; and I won't see Madge, after this, until I've talked with your mother. Will she see me in the morning?"

"I'm sure of it," answered Kate, smiling, as Jerrold came up with a black brow.

"Beg pardon, Godfrey, but Miss Madge desires your assistance. Her girths need tightening, and you are aware of how much they will bear, as you attended to the matter before!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

JERROLD maintained a chilly air of reserve for some time after rejoining Kate, who found her efforts to arouse him to any degree of cheerfulness, fruitless. So depressing was his manner that her own spirits began to flag, finally, and she was on the point of abandoning herself to her own reflections, when Jerrold's voice deterred her.

"Kate, ride slowly, I beg of you! Permit the others to go on, if they will; we need not keep up with them. I must address you, inopportunely it may be, upon a subject of deep importance to myself. I hardly know in what way to open my suit, but I am sanguine, Kate, that you will not be inimical to the confession, which, I assure you, I deem it a privilege to make,—yes, a *privilege!*"

There was no use in trying to stop it ;—in his periphrastic fashion, Jerrold was about to make a proposal, and Kate knew only too well that evasion now, would simply mean postponement ; and annoyed and sorry, though she was, she felt that it would be unfair to Jerrold to let him continue to cherish hopes that could not be realized. His manner towards her, since her recovery, had made it impossible to misunderstand the nature of his regard.

She had endeavored to make him feel the futility of his hopes, for the sake of sparing him open mortification, but it had availed nothing ; he was pitifully blind.

“Kate,” he continued, after a moment’s pause, “the divine passion which comes to a man in its full intensity, but once, fills my soul, and when I ask myself, is it a sudden emotion, and therefore evanescent I find an answer in retrospection ; for never, since the early days of my childhood, has the image of my playmate —my friend—ceased to illumine my path. Kate, assure me that I may rejoice in a full reciprocation of my affection ! My wealth, my name, *myself*, I cast at your feet.”

The others were some distance in advance, and nearing Kate, he placed his hand on her horse’s bridle and held it firmly, while he kept his eyes fastened upon her face. He must have read his answer there, even before she spoke, for his expression changed,

and his hold on the bridle tightened. Kate was grieved and indignant—which feeling predominated, she hardly knew ; she recoiled from giving the death-blow to Jerrold's self-love, and yet, the cool confidence with which he addressed her was insufferable. But they had been happy children together, and she had been so used to overlook and forgive his unhappy traits.

"Jerrold," she said presently, "Psyche rebels at being forced to stand!" and then she continued gently, "I am sorry—more sorry than I can tell, that this should have occurred! It is as hard for me, as for you, for, as we were saying, this morning, we are such very *old friends,—friends*, but that is all; we can never be more!"

Jerrold was stupefied; a look of incredulity swept over his face, which had grown a shade more sallow within the last minute. Presently he recovered himself sufficiently to gasp;

"What! What! You spurn my love? You are trifling, Katrina,—surely, you are trifling! You do not understand—I offer you *myself!* Is that so worthless an oblation?"

"I am not trifling, Jerrold," Kate answered, an almost imperceptible curl wreathing her lips, "You must know that! But because we have been friends so long, let me talk to you plainly. You think now that you care for me, but—"

"*Think I care for you! Great Heavens! I tell you that it is no chimerical affection, begotten in an hour! It has been my life—my guiding star. Kate, you must,—you shall love me—I will not give you up!"*

His voice was hoarse, his eyes, no longer smouldering, blazed upon his companion, while his sharp, white teeth just showed their edges. Kate was shocked at the unrestrained passion, but she knew how much of it was born of wounded pride and vanity. He cared for her as much as his egotistic nature was capable of caring for anyone; she was the only girl with whom he had ever been on intimate terms of friendship, and, in accordance with his character, he had accepted her frank cordiality as marks of especial personal favor; nothing had ever unsettled his faith in his own merits, and hence, he was bewildered and upset by his defeat.

Kate witnessed the bitter outburst with pain, and much of it got into her voice which was sorrowful enough to have touched a less selfish heart than Jerrold's.

"Do n't make it so hard for me, dear Jerrold! Be reasonable!—be a man! Let me show you how impossible it—"

"Pardon, I desire no further explanation; the fact is sufficient. You cast me aside; my love is worthless. It is *enough!*

He waited for a moment, as if for a ray of hope, but Kate's only reply was,

"*I am sorry, Jerrold!*"

With a cold inclination of the head, he dashed his spurs into his horse's side, and disappeared down a by-road, leading off at right angle. Kate hoped that no one had seen the theatrical departure—particularly Grove and Chipie, whom she knew would be merciless towards so tragic a lover of the nineteenth century. The sudden desertion left her in an awkward position, but the bread she had cast upon the waters was about to return to her. Walter Godfrey had witnessed his friend's abrupt leave-taking, and, without much difficulty, surmised its meaning, and very quietly fell out of the line and rode back to Kate.

"Miss Kate, may I ride with you a little while?" he exclaimed, brightly, as he joined her. "I've gotten Mr. Van Wickbecker into a bad humor, and Madge is trying to pacify him. He is an immensely clever fellow, but it's sport to see him post; there's no danger of his horse's strength giving out if he keeps that up," and Walter laughed heartily.

"It was good in you to come back, Mr. Walter," said Kate, feeling that she must account for Jerrold's absence. "Jerrold and I have had a little misunderstanding, and he has gone home by the cross-road. I hope the others may not notice it particularly."

"Oh, I will make that all right, Miss Kate," Walter said quickly, noticing Kate's look of annoyance, and then he called, as they came up with the others :

"Mr. Van Wickbecker, why don't you ask Miss Kate to teach you to 'ride hard;' she will do it much better than I possibly could, and now we have just an even number, so you must come to order. Winthrop took the cross-road home on account of a little indisposition."

Carl had been making some unsuccessful attempts to 'ride hard,' which had provoked so much merriment that his ambition had been fired, and he began his first lesson with laughable zeal. Kate was thankful to have her attention taken up in this way, and owing to Walter's tact, no discomfort arose from Jerryold's sudden retreat. It was poor Chipie, as usual, who was doomed to *outward chagrin*! When about half way home, Mr. Erskine discovered that he had lost a small locket, containing a miniature of his sister, which he had been showing to Chipie; less than a mile had been travelled since he had replaced it in his pocket, so the others waited, on the brow of the hill, while he and Carl went back to search for it.

Chipie's horse received the delay most unwillingly, and pawed and pranced, and champed his bit with restive discontent. It required all of Chipie's strength to hold him in, but disdaining assistance, she circled

and curveted about airily, trying to appear quite at ease, as she listened with apparent interest to Miss Darcy, who was relating an experience she once had with a runaway horse; the thrilling part of the story was just reached,—the part where the horse, after a wild gallop had finally precipitated Miss Darcy into a hogshead half full of water—when a landau rolled by at full speed. The sudden glitter of the harness mountings was too much for Chipie's nervous horse, and away he started, easily divining that no master-hand held the reins. With desperate tugs, and piteous commands to "whoa!" Chipie barely managed to keep her seat. Faster went the landau and faster went the thorough-bred: two barefooted gamins picked up their marbles, bet heavily in "two-zers" and "blood-alleys" as to the result of the race, and then in hot pursuit tore after the flying steed, to witness the "coming in." Suddenly the landau swept into a gate-way, and Chipie, clinging to her pommel, and shouting with frantic emphasis, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" followed up the avenue, directly behind, and when the carriage came to a stop, her horse with a graceful arching of his handsome neck, stopped also, thus leaving his rider in a most conspicuous position, for ten, pale, languid blue eyes to rest upon. With a choking sensation, Chipie scanned the owners of the eyes, for a moment, as she tried to collect her

scattered senses sufficiently to make an explanation, and partly to her relief and partly to her dismay she recognized an acquaintance, in one of the ladies, whose reputation for amiability, however, she knew to be not without foundation. The sight of a familiar face restored her equanimity directly, and in spite of her flurried entrance, she looked very charming, and her vehement cries having been covered partially by the noise of carriage wheels, it was n't half the dreadful mishap which it had at first promised, and she would have been very soon mollified, had she not found Mr. Erskine at the gate waiting for her. He had found his locket, and had remounted his horse, just as Chipie had taken flight, and although he had seen enough to alarm him for her safety, the drollery of the affair had not struck him, having lost sight of her as she turned in after the carriage ; but Chipie did not know this ; she only saw a serious look in the grey eyes, as she walked her subdued horse into the road, which she misconstrued, as she had misconstrued similar looks before.

"I am *fated*," she said bitterly to herself. "The man will think I am an idiot! Such things never happened to me before this summer; what does it mean? But it is *cruel* in him to look so stern and dignified always!"

Chipie was unusually quiet after this, and permitted

her companion to do most of the talking for the rest of the way home.

That night, when slumber at length overcame her, the events of the day mingled themselves in her dreams, strangely. She dreamed that she was running a race with Lafayette, and in their excitement, they ran their horses through a window of a stately homestead, passing over a long dining table, at the head of which Mr. Erskine presided, his right hand guest being Paul Revere, who wore a locket upon his watch-chain, containing a miniature of herself.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER saying good-night, at Chavenage, Mr. Erskine wended his way home, slowly. It was only nine o'clock when he reached the little cottage, but it was quite dark with the exception of a dim light in the front room, which he occupied.

The moonlight was soft and pleasant, and the air was full of the scent of southern wood, but apparently unconscious of the evening charms, Mr. Erskine, with head bowed, and arms folded across his breast, paced slowly up and down the grass-grown path. For more than an hour he kept up his quiet beat; but he did not think aloud, so the man in the moon was baffled in his attempt to account for the contracted brow and the firm lines about the mouth. At last,

with something between a whistle and a long-drawn sigh, he approached the little green door, drew a key from his pocket and let himself in.

And while Chipie, a mile away, was dreaming her droll medley, Mr. Erskine sat by the hour-glass table penning a letter to his sister. After he had finished, he sat back, glanced hastily through it, and then, with a short laugh, folded and sealed it. It was a very simple letter and seemed hardly to have called for such profound thought; it ran thus:—

“Caroline, my dear sister:

I sincerely regret having merited the maledictions which your note of Thursday last showered upon me. I will make no attempt to vindicate myself; I only ask if you aren’t a trifle wild to expect ‘entertaining’ letters from the quiet country gentleman into which your brother has been recently metamorphosed?

What shall I write about? You demand a ‘gossipy’ letter:—my dear Carry, in this nut-shell of a community, there is little to gossip about even were I a good news-catcher, which I am not. Should I enlarge too freely upon the beauties of nature here displayed, you would dub me, as once before, romantic. Were I to offer you a series of intellectual treatises, you would immediately fall to comparing me, detrimentally, with my honored brother-in-law. So what am I to do! First, you beggar me, and then you ask me to give!

By the way, Caroline, to make a sudden leap to another subject, are you aware what an *old* fellow your brother is getting to be? I doubt it! Otherwise, you would never have been guilty of insulting his venerable years by requesting ‘gossipy’ letters;—rather, solemn exhortations of wisdom, as becometh one on the down-hill of life! My child, last Friday marked my fortieth birth-day. Yes, my sister, I sit, to-night in my forty-first year! Quite a relic, am I not? The fact is, I’ve had neither time, nor occasion, of late, to count my years until dropping down into this snug nest, which offers ample time for reflection, but very little to reflect upon, outside of one’s self. I admit that the weight of my years is not sufficiently heavy to crush my spirits or my ambitions, entirely; although I suppose that the younger generation vote me a bachelor *passé*, and would never believe me capable of a youthful sensation—*love*, for instance. Ah! what more *ridiculous* spectacle, can you conjure up, Carry, than that of your brother, after all these years, falling in love? Something of a joke to think of, isn’t it? Unfortunate too, as well as ridiculous, if the object of his regard were a very youthful lady, beautiful, noble and talented;—unfortunate for the old brother, but amusing to the lady—no, *amusing* did I say? No, no, not that,—she would be far too generous and true to—Bah! What am I talking about! I’m in a freakish

mood, to-night! The truth is, I ought to get back to my work; I've been wasting my time I fear, although I have gotten wonderfully rested.

But one word more: do you believe that it would be possible, or rather *probable* that a girl, petted and courted in society and with every advantage to win whomsoever she would, could be attracted towards a man twice her own age? Candidly, what do you think about it? It does n't seem probable to me. You ought to be able to judge upon such a matter, and I would really like your opinion."

When Mrs. Burlingame reached this point in the letter, three days after it was written, she could restrain her indignation no longer; tossing the letter aside, she looked appealingly towards her husband, who, stretched in an easy chair beside her, was meditatively regarding his slippers feet, which were pointed comfortably towards the open grate.

"Archibald, *what* does it mean! Rogers is *certainly* in love! 'Old,' indeed! A 'relic!' A '*passé bachelor!*' What absurdity! The great noble fellow,—why, he will *never* grow old,—*never!*"

Mr. Burlingame smiled, and blinked contentedly at the glowing coals. Mrs. Burlingame was undeniably excited by her brother's fragmentary epistle, and after a moment's pause, again broke forth:

"Would it be *possible*,—" "would it be *probable*"

that 'such a girl would be *attracted!*' Oh, Archibald, would you have believed that there existed a man of such noble modesty? Ah; Rogers my dear," she murmured with soft vehemence, as she rocked rapidly to and fro, "happy the girl, indeed, who wins you!"

"Have you an idea whom the *fortunate* young lady may be?" queried Mr. Burlingame, with a smile of amusement.

"Most assuredly, my dear," responded Mrs. Burlingame, decidedly. "It is Kate Sturgis whom Demmie talks so much about. You remember, she told us of a delightful little visit which she made some time ago to—what was the name of the place?—Chaveley I believe—the name of the Sturgis's country seat! Yes, yes, I might have known that this would come! Rogers had so much to say in his last letter, weeks ago, about his anxiety for Miss Sturgis while she was ill. How glowingly he portrayed her courage, and heroism in saving her cousin from drowning, and how despondently he wrote of her prolonged and serious illness!"

After this, Caroline Burlingame fell into a brown study, and before leaving it, she had not only attended her brother's wedding, but had welcomed her new sister, Kate Sturgis Erskine, to her mountain villa, and had planned and carried out a dozen, or more, charm-

ing festivities in her honor. Next she retired to a *crimson* study, and seating herself at her writing-desk, she indited a letter which should have carried hope to the doubting, courage to the halting, and proved an antidote to *mauvaise honte*.

CHAPTER XX.

THE morning succeeding the horseback ride, although as bright and exhilarating as the preceding, was unappreciated by the weary equestrians, who, with the exception of Grove, slept long after the usual breakfast hour. It was necessity rather than inclination which drew Grove from the bliss of his morning nap ; he had a letter to get off by the morning mail, and after it was written and sealed, he stepped out upon the veranda to hasten the groom's departure. The freshness of the morning was inviting, and just as he had sauntered out amongst the shrubs, his ear caught the sound of hurrying hoofs. A few minutes later, General Winthrop's horses appeared at full speed, evidently bound for the mail-train. From the window of

the coupé Jerrold's face, gloomy and haggard, looked out, and Grove, concealed by the shrubbery, saw his glance shoot towards Kate's window, and rest there with a cold, despairing look.

"Jove!" he ejaculated half aloud, as the thud of hoofs died away, "I suspected as much, yesterday! Poor boy, poor boy! Sorry for him, although he *was* an infernal little blockhead! Hard on Kate, too," he went on, after a pause; "she hates this sort of thing mightily. But I wo'n't tell her of my cheerful vision; —'t would only give her the blues. Heigh-ho! it must come hard on a fellow—a hit like this!"

With thoughts hundreds of miles away from the flowers before him, Grove stooped down and broke off a spray of heliotrope, inhaled its gentle perfume mechanically, placed it in his button-hole, and then carefully detached from his watch-chain, a ring—a lady's ring, one could see at a glance. There was nothing remarkable in its appearance, to a cursory observer,—simply a circlet of gold; but upon close examination, such as Grove was now giving, there appeared delicately engraven, a spray, with leaves and buds of the Alpine flower, Edelweiss; it bore no blossom; the stem ended abruptly, at the edge as if lack of space had deprived it of its crowning beauty:—the incompleteness suggested some mystic charm. Only would the little spray bloom, upon

Grove's wedding day, when the ring would be placed upon the finger of the fair bethrothed far away in a foreign clime—the finger which wore, upon this morning of Grove's deep musing, a thinner circlet of the same rich gold bearing, like a drop of glistening dew, a solitary edelweiss blossom.

Presently the ring was replaced, and Grove strolled down the walk with a shade more of compassion for Jerrold than might have moved him under other circumstances, for even in his present character of a crushed lover, Jerrold was far from being an hero in his eyes. He was still walking about, when the coupé returned, and stopping at the gate, the coachman delivered a note addressed to Kate, which Grove took at once to her room, and when Kate awoke she found it pushed under her door ; it did not require the glance at the odd chirography to tell her from whence it came ; she felt it before she had taken it into her hand.

“Katrina :

I address you for the last time ! The home of my childhood, is my home no longer. Henceforth the kindlier shores of an alien land shall be adopted by one whose birth-place is but a mockery. Let not the thought of a wrecked life, imbitter your future happiness ! 'T is the will of the gods that Helenium alone shall bloom for me ! Farewell !

J. R. V. Winthrop.”

Kate was unhappy. She read the note over two or three times, and then tore it up. Not that she for a moment fancied that Jerrold's life was the blasted thing which his note seemed to convey, for she believed "that men had died, and worms had eaten them; *but not for love!*" However, she was sorry for her old friend's hurt, and while she knew that a few months, or perhaps weeks, would work wonders in assuaging the pain, and healing the wounded vanity, she could not suppress the sob which rose at the thought, that a keen heart-pain had crept into the golden summer.

As she sat, thinking the matter over, the breakfast bell rang and she was obliged to go down, although feeling very much out of harmony with the laughing voices which greeted her appearance. She succeeded so well, however, in hiding her sadness, that nobody save Grove detected the shadow that occasionally flitted over the merry face, and his acuteness was due to the knowledge which his early rise had brought him; for certainly no one joined more gaily in the laugh, than did Kate, as Carl, with a disconsolate physiognomy seated himself at the table with a total absence of his customary grace.

"Look here, Sir," exclaimed Grove, banteringly, "that fine lesson which you took in riding hard, yesterday, was rather too much for your undisciplined bones! I thought that you were entering into it with more zest than wisdom."

"Ugh! Ugh! I go never to a famous Inn, again," groaned Carl, closing his eyes. "I despise most abundantly all Wayside Inns;—my body is fractured; it is to be months ere I am again complete."

"Nonsense, man," laughed Grove; "it needn't be three hours if you'll take my advice. After breakfast, we'll just start off on a good sharp walk of three or four miles, and by the time we get back, you'll find yourself a new man."

"A walk of miles?" cried Carl, indignantly. "No, no, do not think to place so *meeserable* a joke upon me! *Walk*, in this altogether solemn condition! Ugh!"

"Poor innocent, I have n't an idea of joking you. Don't you know that that, or another brisk trot, is the only cure for lameness brought on by over-riding?"

It required Kate's assurance to convince Carl that he was not being made the subject of a joke, and he was finally persuaded to accompany Grove and Mr. Erskine in their troutng range up a brook, a mile or two from Saxony.

Kate had n't seen Madge alone since Walter Godfrey's disclosure, but an opportunity soon presented itself, and in her interest in Madge's little *affaire de cœur*, her own was merged. Madge had told her aunt all about it, the night before, but Mrs. Sturgis having been suddenly smitten with the fear that she

had been acting rashly in permitting such a terminus to her young niece's visit, to come about, could not bestow the heartfelt approval, which Madge longed for; however, her praise of Walter Godfrey's character, and her open appreciation of his many charms, gave Madge vast comfort and encouragement for the home verdict, which she looked forward to, with no little impatience.

"So, Madge dear," Kate exclaimed, as they made their way, arm in arm, towards the hammocks, "*this* is what the seclusion I promised you, has brought about! You couldn't have done much more at Newport, could you?"

"I know it, Kate, but I could n't help it; it just *did* itself. It was meant to happen, I'm sure!"

"Then you've changed your opinion, have you?" laughed Kate. "I believe that you were inclined to think, a month or two ago, that things only happen by *chance!*"

"Yes, I certainly have, and it is far more delightful, I am come to think, to feel that events, like this for instance, are pre-ordained! But Kate," with an anxious little look, "shall you like me as much as ever, now that I am engaged?"

Kate smiled indulgently. "I don't like to make rash promises," she said. "However, if you are a *nice* engaged girl, I sha n't cross you from my books;

there is a great difference, you know, in engaged girls! Some are intolerable; but if you will promise not to look abstracted when we are off on good times, and if you'll shun that Evangeline stare into vacancy, as you would an adder, you shall find no decrease in my affection."

"But Kate, Walter and I are going to be fashionables, just the same as we've always been," said Madge, ruefully, "and you and Chipie won't like that, now that you have so many new ideas in your head! But we do enjoy society so much!"

"Oh, what does Chipie have to say about it?" asked Kate, curiously. "Of course you've told her?"

"Chipie?" repeated Madge, loftily. "No, Chipie knows nothing about it, yet."

"Why, Madge, do you really mean that you have let mamma and me know, and not Chipie? What is the reason?"

"Because," responded Madge, with much dignity, "I wish Chipie to know nothing about the matter until I have heard from mamma and papa. You know how she will act, Kate; she is pleased to look upon me as if I were a child, and as my chaperon, feels privileged to lecture and restrict me to her heart's content. I don't like it; and I'm not going to have my lovely secret desecrated by discussion."

"But, Madge, Chipie will be so angry!"

"I can't help it, Kate! She is a darling girl, but she has her faults, and I don't care to expose them at present."

Madge gave one of her provoking ripples, as she threw herself back in a hammock.

"Miss Independence, if you do not take my advice and tell Chipie everything, this morning, I sha'n't envy you the consequences," said Kate quite seriously. "Besides, it is n't at all fair, Madge; '*come*, let us reason together.'"

She sat down beside Madge, and for some time a lively disputation was kept up, but Kate finally came off victor; and she had just consented to do all that she could to break the news gently, when Chipie, as if she had had a presentiment that she was wanted, came towards them. She was in jubilant spirits, and Madge reassured, grew bold and resumed her pedestal, from which she had slipped within the last few minutes.

"What a good time you girls are having all by yourselves," was Chipie's gay salutation. "Is it a morning gossip?—O, do let me into it."

Madge and Kate exchanged glances.

"Are you in a mood for hearing news?" asked Kate, with an effort at self control.

"I was never in a readier," answered Chipie, blithely.

"Well, which do you like the better,—a sudden sur-

prise, or a gradual divulgation?" questioned Kate, feeling rather tremulous at the unsuspecting face confronting her.

"A sudden surprise, by all means," replied Chipie, unhesitatingly. "I dote on surprises."

"Then permit me to introduce to your majesty, the future Mrs. Walter Godfrey." Kate waved her hand towards Madge.

"Girls, what do you mean?" asked Chipie, looking startled.

"We mean that our Madge has further immortalized the 'Wayside Inn,' by charming into song a tale as sweet as any ever sung beneath its honored roof," replied Kate, with great animation. "Would you have believed that the little romance was transpiring in our very midst, Chipie?"

Kate assumed a flippant manner that she was far from feeling, hoping to avert the storm which she saw was about to burst over Madge's head. But it was of no use; Chipie seated herself in the rustic seat, by which she had been standing, and throwing as much fierceness into her expression as her piquant face would admit, demanded:

"Madge, is your cousin serious?"

Looking down upon Chipie, from her figurative pedestal, Madge replied deliberately:

"It is n't like Kate to joke upon such subjects!"

"And do you really mean that you have—have *engaged* yourself to that young boy?"

"I am engaged to *Mr. Godfrey!*"—freezingly.

"Then, Miss Madge, I shall take it upon myself to *disengage* you, at once! Why child, what are you dreaming of? This Godfrey is a *mere boy!*"

Madge did not deign to fill up the pause which came after this, and Kate had said all that she intended to say for the present.

"Now, Madge," Chipie soon continued, "I shall see this boy and have a plain talk with him; meanwhile, I shall write to mamma and have you go directly to her."

"Chipie dear, I would n't continue this tirade, if I were you; it hardly becomes you!" Madge was frigid now.

"I am satisfied to know that uncle Malcolm and *auntie* approve my choice!"

Madge moved majestically away, and for a minute or two after her disappearance, silence reigned. But soon Kate's mouth began to curve, and she felt an inclination towards levity.

"Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
Draw near them then in being *merciful.*"

"Merciful!" exclaimed Chipie, with asperity.
"How *can* you take this matter so calmly, Kate? I

have never been so vexed about anything in my life ! What will they say at home ? The blame will fall upon me, of course, and I deserve it ;—*no*, I do not deserve it ;—how could I have imagined that two such children would have thought of *engaging* themselves, and that, too, without first consulting their elders ! They must have been very underhanded about it, I am sure, or I should have suspected.”

“ Bless your dear heart,” cried Kate, laughing, “ a more open and natural courtship never could have occurred ; the very ingenuousness of it was what deceived everybody ! ”

“ But this young Godfrey seems like a boy ;—he can’t be older than Madge herself ! Does he seem *grown up*, Kate ? I’ve thought so little about him ! ”

“ He seems unusually grown up, for his age,” was the amused reply. “ He is twenty-one, Madge says.”

“ Twenty-one ! ” repeated Chipie, with contempt. “ And Madge is just nineteen. Kate, it is absurd ! I shall not give my consent to this child’s play, for, of course, it can be nothing else ! Madge must have a free, happy grown-up girlhood before she settles down to the cares of an establishment ; the girl who misses that, misses one of the sweetest things in life. Why, Kate, I wouldn’t exchange the five lovely, free years which have passed since I was Madge’s age, for anything in the world ; and I know that they will feel just as I do about it, at home.”

"You are right in your ideas, Chipie, I agree, but it's a dreadful way to take towards poor Madge. Your belligerous aspect was enough to bring about an elopement at once. *Do* be amiable until you hear from uncle Waldo. After all, it may prove simply a summer *bagatelle*, if opposition isn't brought to bear!"

"Well," sighed Chipie, reflectively, "I must go in and talk with auntie; and if I succeed in calming myself, I will return to you by and by."

She got up and moved slowly towards the house, evidently no longer *doting* upon surprises. Kate followed the retreating figure, with her eyes, and could not help wondering if she held the secret which had been the cause of Chipie's blindness in this affair of Madge's. She was still pondering, when Madge, who had espied her sister's departure, from the lilac-path, where she had been strolling up and down, returned.

"There!" she exclaimed, "You see how it is; it is just as I knew it would be! You don't suppose, Kate, that Chipie will go writing to mamma and making trouble? Where is she now?"

"She is with mamma; and I don't think you need fear anything very bad, Madge. I have no doubt she will be very different when we see her next, for she looked quite subdued when she left me."

And sure enough, a half an hour had hardly elapsed

when a voice was heard, repeating : "I hold the olive in my hand ; my words are full of peace as matter ;" and with conciliatory nods and smiles, Chipie advanced towards her sister,—and embraced her—with a somewhat exaggerated fervor, it is true,—but to her credit be it said, Madge received the overture, (feeling that it must have been a sore humiliation to her sister) with indulgent kindness. Kate did not wait to hear Chipie's explanation of her changed mood, but walked away towards the gardens ; she met Walter coming from the house ; his face wore a bright look, and she rightly guessed that the conference with her mother had not been altogether unsuccessful.

"I think it will be all right," he said, with an earnest smile, as he grasped Kate's outstretched hand ; and then he added, a faint shadow touching his brow, "Miss Kate, you know that Winthrop left for Europe, this morning ?"

"Yes," Kate answered quickly ; and then asked, "You will stay with General Winthrop until he leaves ?"

"Yes, but that wo n't be for long ; the General goes to Washington two weeks from to-day. I do n't like to think of the breaking up !"

A minute after Walter had joined Madge, and as Kate walked on, she suddenly felt something hit her hat, and a tiny roll of paper fell at her feet ; she picked it up, and unfolding it, read :—

TALE OF THE WAYSIDE INN.

On a bright September morning,
 When the earth was green and fair,
 When the birds their songs were trilling,
 And sweet perfumes filled the air;

When the silv'ry, purling brooklet,
 Flowing o'er its pebbly bed,
 Breathed all sorts of pretty secrets
 To the flowers it daily fed;

In the time-worn, faded tavern,
 Which you know is famed in rhyme,
 And which breathes a mist of romance
 O'er events of olden time;

A blithesome group had gathered
 In the hall, now dim and grey,
 Which years agone had used to throng
 With guests from far away.

But two, beneath the ancient roof,
 In the bloom of fresh young life,
 As they wandered through the quaint old rooms
 So fraught with mirth and strife,

Saw not the walls with time-stained hue,
 The floors with warp and seam;
 For all to them was glorified,—
 They lived in Love's young dream!

The one——

“ Well, my little poetess,” cried Kate, with a merry

laugh, "why didn't you finish it? You left off in a most interesting part; now reveal your throne!"

A childish peal of laughter was the answer, and Winny was discovered perched high up in the branches of an old apple tree, where she was enjoying her favorite companions—pencil and folio.

"If you'd waited five minutes longer, Kate, I would have had some more ready. I've a much nicer one than that, but you can't see it till it's all finished, and that won't be for ever so long." Winny looked mysteriously down from between the branches.

"But how happened you to write this? Has anyone been telling you secrets?"

"Part of it jumped into my head, yesterday, when I heard Mr. Godfrey call Madge, in a real strange, dancing voice, 'My Queen,' and then uncle Malcolm told me the rest, a little while ago."

CHAPTER XXI.

Two weeks had passed since the event recorded in the preceding chapter; and meanwhile Mother Nature had been decorating her cherished darlings in gay and glowing colors. The trees, although not yet in the zenith of their autumnal glow, no longer wore their cool summer tints, and the golden-rod, and purple and white asters crowded the roadsides, as if determined that their share of the year should triumph in the wealth and depth of its beauty; the feathery clematis hung in captivating festoons over tumble-down walls and twisted tree trunks, as if it longed to conceal their unloveliness from the critical passer-by; and the gorgeous butterflies, with their tiny red and yellow relatives, gave reverence to the kindly charity

by clinging to the misty blossoms, and attracting the eye more surely to the nebulous beauty.

The young people were enjoying every moment of these last days, although not in quite the enthusiastic spirit which characterized the first few weeks. They were content to enjoy the hours as they came. General Winthrop had left Wildwood, and Walter Godfrey had been unable to resist the invitation which had come to him from Chavenage, to prolong his stay until Mr. Erskine and the girls should take their departure.

The September chilliness had made it a delight to gather about the huge log fires, in the evening, and it would be long before the choice hours of conversation and discussion, spent within their glow, would be forgotten ; they were hours to be treasured !

It was into the midst of one of these talks, that Donald suddenly presented himself with the evening mail, and exclaimed, as he sorted the letters over :

“ Mr. Erskine, you are most fortunate ;—three for you, and big ones, all of them ; two tolerably thick ones for Mr. Van Weckbecker ; two mediums for Kate ; and a thinnest of the thin for Chip.”

“ Nothing for the rest of us, boy ? ” questioned Grove.

“ Only my blessing,” said Donald, with a paternal smile, as he drew a chair next to Winny and began to tell her in a low voice, of his marvellous bicycle feats that afternoon.

Kate observed that Mr. Erskine was looking anxiously at the addresses upon his letters, and said:

"This is Liberty Hall, Mr. Erskine; it is permissible to read one's letters whenever one likes; Chipie, let us set the example!"

Chipie ran her eye over her brief note, and at the end made a wry face at Grove, which Mr. Erskine just caught as he raised his eyes for a moment from the page he was reading; it was the letter which his sister had written a fortnight before. He did not read it through, for it was long and closely written, and the opening warned him to put it aside for the present, so he refolded it, at the end of the first page, which ran:—

"Now ROGERS:

Sister wants to know all about it! *Did* he go into the country with his little gun and rod, determined to shoot some little shoots, and fish some little fish? And *did* he find it all such pleasant sport that he could not tear himself away, even for a week's visit to his only sister, pining for a glimpse of him, up on a mountain-top?

Ah, Rogers, I am more than suspicious! I am confident that this Kate Sturgis, of whom I hear so much, is accountable for the character and brevity of your letters. I have been greatly puzzled about the

matter, having always named you as my *beau ideal* of a correspondent,—but now I comprehend. Do you know, my dear brother, I am quite ready to love and admire Miss Sturgis! I've heard so many nice things about her from Demmie Gordon, who knew her well, at school, and saw much of her in society, last season. It seems that she actually *refused* that man whom *I* consider the third finest man in the world—Colonel Harry Lossing! If you are more fortunate, you certainly have a right to feel flattered, after that! Demmie says it was a great blow to the Colonel,—poor dear fellow,—that he quite worshipped Miss Sturgis, and everyone thought what a fine match it would have been; but——”

Here it was that Mr. Erskine had shut the letter up, and with a slight tinge of annoyance at having been thus made aware of Kate's private affairs, he sent a swift glance in her direction. She had just asked Chipie if her note were from home.

“Yes,” Chipie replied, “mamma and papa returned two days ago, and we are expected to pack up our ferns and birds' nests and go home. They are homesick for us, dear mamma says. Well-a-day!” she added, with a half stifled sigh, “I suppose we must prepare to gird on our armor for the winter's siege! How odd it will seem to return to it all, after this Arcadian life!”

She was gazing thoughtfully at the blazing log. Whether Mr. Erskine had noticed her remark, did not appear, for he had opened a second letter and was apparently intent upon it. His face was clouded and absorbed, as he slowly replaced the business looking sheet in its envelope. He, too, riveted his gaze upon the log, now almost ready to break.

"Do your letters bring pleasant tidings, Mr. Erskine?" Kate asked presently.

"Thank you," was the quiet reply, "I suppose that I ought not to say *no*; but the truth is, Miss Kate, I am become such an ease-loving, selfish mortal, that I am loth to leave this paradisiacal retreat. This letter recalls the fact, which I had well-nigh forgotten, that life isn't all a gala-day: so within two days I must make my adieux, and return to action. My memory of Saxony," he added, intensely, "will ever be one of the pleasantest memories of my life!"

The log gave a final hiss, broke, and fell apart, scattering its coals, and sending a stream of gay sparks up the wide chimney. It might have been the sudden flare of the fire-light, which caused the sudden flush on Chipie's cheeks, but she was conscious of its existence and kept her eyes upon the flickering coals.

Everyone expressed regret at Mr. Erskine's words, except Chipie, who had become suddenly interested in one of the exploits with which Donald was enter-

taining Winny ; and Kate, as she sat for a moment musing, wondered if it were the dying embers which had lent the pallor to Mr. Erskine's face.

After this, a few attempts were made to resume the interrupted conversation, but the interest seemed to have flagged, and no one was inclined to be particularly brilliant.

Earlier than usual the group separated. Mr. Erskine had walked over from the cottage, and when he rose to go, Grove and Walter got their hats and canes, insisting upon accompanying him part way. Carl had letters which required immediate attention, and soon the fire, in spite of renewed cheer, was deserted by all except Chipie. There Grove found her, upon his return, listlessly cutting the leaves of a new book ; Grove was in a vainglorious mood, as he came in ; he was sure that he had discovered a secret, during the evening, and he was eager to flourish his sagacity before his favorite cousin. But he showed a commendable self-sacrificing spirit, by masking his features in unconsciousness, as he drew a chair near to Chipie, and seizing the tongs made an attack upon the half burnt logs.

"Ma belle cousine," he exclaimed, "it is fortunate that I came to the rescue ; these poor friends would have been ready for their shrouds, in five more minutes. Jove ! I'm actually cold ; this evening air has a sting in it, which is far from agreeable !"

Rising, he rang the bell for Tony.

"Tony," he said, as the old servant entered with a grave bow, "can't you get up a rouser of a fire, here—one that will blaze, and crackle, and make us forget that winter is coming?"

Tony left the room with a comprehensive grin, and soon returned, bearing an immense pine knot which he triumphantly placed across the andirons. In a minute, fantastic tongues of flame leaped from every side.

"Dar, Massa Grove," exclaimed Tony, elatedly, "reckon dar aint much 'casion fur lamps an gas wid dese yere 'luminators! Massr Grove, my granmoder live to de extreme *exemplary* age ob one hundred and fo' yars, and dese yere pine-knots was all she eber done hab in her house for 'luminators; she would n't hab no gas or presconces roun her house no how yah could fix it, an' she neber had t'use a eyeglass t'de day ob her *experation*,—could n't 'suade her t'fetch one across her eyes nohow, an' when she obtained her one hundred and fo' yar, her eyes was so legible, her could read anythin' yah could set afore her. Oh, dey's strodinary 'luminators fur shu!"

With a parting look of appreciation at the fire, and showing his teeth delightfully, he bowed himself out.

"Oh, Grove," said Chipie, laughing, as the door closed upon them, "Tony is outrageous; I saw him,

this afternoon, sitting sanctimoniously under a tree, reading the Bible, and now, how unblushingly he tells this story of his grandmother,—poor old slave!"

"Perhaps he doesn't tell it unblushingly! One can't tell, you know!"

"But really, Grove, I'm serious. It is dreadful to encourage these people by seeming to credit their fabrications! Why, it was only yesterday that Princess was brushing my hair, when suddenly she exclaimed, 'Mis' Chipie, you'se got splendid har—so straight and shiny; my har was jes' cisely like you'se till Madam's ole Virginny spilt a glassful ob bilin' har-oil on to my head, and frizzed it all up into dis yere; Ise awful mad wid Virginny fur spoiling my long, straight, shiny har!' The child twitched her woolly locks so regretfully, that I almost believed her."

"Bless you," laughed Grove, "it isn't that they mean to be deceitful, but their imaginative faculties are remarkably developed; their faith is both great and simple, and like that old fellow—you know whom I mean, I forget his name—they have but to *believe* that a thing is, and it *is*. Hence, their exculpation."

"Grove, I'm ashamed of you. Confess that you enjoy their absurd fibs, and that you aren't philanthropic enough to forego a momentary amusement for the sake of morally benefiting these misguided creatures! I doubt if you've *ever* in your life reproved one of their falsehoods!"

"No," was the smiling answer, "I'm forced to respect the fecundity of their brains: the persuasive power by which they beguile their listeners is worthy a Dickens—a Thackeray—a—Oh, motherdy, are you home again?" he interrupted himself, as Mrs. Sturgis appeared in the doorway. "Here is a chair waiting for you! Was Madam Rowley still bemoaning her broken jar, or had she some fresher grievance?"

"Not a grievance, this time, but a '*bonne bouche*,' as she informed me when she showed me three beautiful *plaques* which the Major had just given her; she wants you to see them, Grove! But what is this," she went on, "about Mr. Erskine? Is he really going to leave us, this week?"

"So he affirms," responded Grove.

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Sturgis. "What a void he will leave behind!"

The last was uttered in a tone of soliloquy, but no sooner had she said it, than an expression on Chipie's face, made her regret it. Had she been dreaming, or why had not the thought, suddenly awakened, occurred to her before?

"Can it be," she asked herself, "that a second heart-history has been weaving itself?"

She was startled, a trifle anxious, but not altogether displeased.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next day was spent in gathering and pressing ferns ; Madge wished to carry home a pretty collection of them, and most of the day was passed in the woods. It was late in the afternoon, when Chipie and the two children emerged with their burdens of waving maiden's-hair ; they had volunteered to gather this last lot, to fill out the folios to which Walter and Madge were rapturously devoting themselves. They had turned into the path which led towards the terraces at the back of the house, when Mr. Erskine, looking as he did on the day when Chipie had first seen him, came in sight, his gun and knapsack swung across his shoulder.

He had not been to Chavenage, during the day, an

omission so unusual that it had occasioned much surprise, especially as it was his last day.

It had been a restless day to Chipie; she had been having little battles with herself, and indignantly upbraiding herself, because of the cloud which had suddenly lowered upon her, the previous evening, and which, try as she would, she could not lift. She was expounding to herself some highly philosophical reasons why she should not care for this new friend's exit from her world, at the very moment of his appearance.

"May I relieve you of your picturesque load?" he said, in his usual pleasant manner, as he came forward. And then he added, as he took the heavy mass from her hands, "Did you leave any of the graceful things to die uncared for?"

Donald turned, at this moment, and exclaimed bluntly :

"Mr. Erskine, we've all been wondering what had become of you! If you'd been here, this morning, you would have seen one of the jolliest pickerel of the season,—a six pounder and a regular beauty. Chipie was about as mad as I was that you didn't happen over to see it!"

"Is the young man a faithful chronicler, Miss Margrave?" questioned Mr. Erskine, with a quiet smile, and at the same time a searching glance.

"We certainly felt that it was cruel for a fisherman to lose such a sight," answered Chipie.

"I am sorry not to have seen your prize, Donald ! You deserve a premium for capturing it."

For a few minutes the conversation was mostly between Mr. Erskine and the children ; but presently Donald remembered that his father had promised to ride with Winny and himself, and so hurrying off as fast as their burdens would let them, the children went, —not altogether to Chipie's pleasure.

"Miss Margrave," said Mr. Erskine, earnestly ; "you know I have only one day left in which I may ask favors ! Will you allow me to take you the long way home, by the lake road ? I should like to commemorate my last evening by one of the pleasant talks which have given me so much enjoyment this summer."

Chipie wished that he had not asked it, but an assent was the only answer to be given, under the circumstances, and so they walked on in the direction which Mr. Erskine had intimated. The truth was, Chipie was uncomfortable. For the first time in many weeks she was experiencing an awkwardness in being alone with Mr. Erskine ; and heartily wishing that she had some excuse for declining the walk, she rambled on in a lively manner, quite discordant with her feelings, hoping to seem her natural self.

Soon, however, there was no need of disguise. It was impossible not to be tranquilized by the soft,

hazy atmosphere which makes the transitory Indian summer such a marvel. Chipie was glad that she had come.

When they reached the summit of the hill, they stopped to rest and look about. Again they were watching the lake in its beauty of the waning day, as they had watched it weeks ago; only now, all nature seemed mellowed into a strange mystery.

"My farewell draught of this almost *ideal* beauty!" said Mr. Erskine, with low vehemence, as he raised his hat from his head.

Chipie unconsciously clutched the rudbeckias which she had gathered on the way; but she would not have a pause occur here, so she said quickly the first thing that came into her mind.

"Mr. Godfrey leaves us, this week, also. I am sorry, for I am just beginning to find out how charming he is; do you not like him, Mr. Erskine?"

"Yes, he is a fine young fellow. And he ought to be a very happy fellow," he added with unwonted earnestness, "if youth and success can make one so!"

Again the view absorbed him; but suddenly throwing down the ferns which he held, he turned towards his companion, and when he next spoke, his voice was low and full of tenderness:—

"Miss Chipie, forgive me,—perhaps I am wrong, but I cannot go away without at least *telling* you of

what the summer has been to me! Donald said that the friends had been wondering why I had absented myself upon this, my last day: I will tell you why! Alone, in the silent fields, I have been, for hours, revolving a question dearer to me than my life. Miss Chipie I am no longer a *young* man; I am almost twice your age, and while life spreads out before you, a vista of sunshine and happiness, to me it is a diorama wherein the shadows fall and linger; a fabric with golden threads, truly, but with only enough to give value and beauty to the darker weft! *Marghreta*, I am striving to get at the *heart of life*, a heart noble and true, but not gay;—am I ungenerous to ask you, happy and care free, to help me in my search? *I love you!*"

For a moment Chipie was stunned by the intensity of the man. Hardly conscious of any definable emotion, she stood with her eyes fastened upon the ferns at her feet.

"Marghreta!"—

Only the one word,—her own name; but it penetrated the air with such melody, that from very wonder she looked up. As long as she lived the memory of that face never faded; at first she thought that a sun-ray had fallen upon it,—but no, the spreading beech formed a complete shade, and she knew that the inner light was its antitype.

Chipie was amazed at her own unimpassioned mood ; for a moment she had experienced a throb of unalloyed happiness, and then, incredible as it would seem, a vision rose before her of that first meeting. All the mortification and misery which it had brought her, came sweeping back afresh, and the thought of the revulsion which her companion would feel were she to reveal herself, held her mute.

When, after much waiting, the silence was broken, it might have been but a variation in the murmur of the whispering branches, so faint and far away it seemed.

“ Do n’t—do n’t say any more, Mr. Erskine ! I am not at all what you think me ;—I have a confession to make ! ”

“ My *child!* ”

The light had died out of his face, and there were intense lines about the mouth.

“ I— ”

But Chipie didn’t finish ; with a howl of delight Major came springing down upon her, with his usual lack of ceremony, and Kate, Grove and Carl appeared a moment after, from behind the bend of the path. That they were as much surprised as the two figures whom they found themselves confronting, there could be no doubt ; nor was it possible to mistake the nature of the tete-à-tete ; the two faces

and Mr. Erskine's outstretched hands made it only too obvious.

Kate was in a tumult of rage with herself. "To think," she exclaimed to Grove, when they were alone, "that the very thing which I've been hoping for all summer, should have been interrupted in that barbarous fashion! I wonder if they will both hate poor Major!"

The only thing to do, however, was to appear as oblivious as possible. Grove, as usual, manifested his perfect unconsciousness of anything unusual, by a flow of nonsensical pleasantries, which, if it helped to relieve from embarrassment, did so at the expense of some tortured nerves. Kate felt that every word which was uttered was a sort of desecration, and as soon as she could do so, without too much brusqueness, said :

"We must bid you good-by, Mr. Erskine and Chipie; I've commissioned these young men to get me as much of that flaming golden maple, overhanging the lake, as they think I have a right to claim; and lest they grow weary in well-doing, I must remain near to encourage them."

Kate congratulated herself upon having made a politic manœuvre, as she sat waiting for her leaves; the broken thread could now be caught up, she told herself; but unfortunately, her cleverness availed

nothing, for as she, with her retinue, disappeared down one side of the hill, Donald, running and out of breath, appeared on the other.

"Hallo, there, Chip." he called excitedly: "I would n't make promises if I were you, unless I meant to keep them! Uncle Waldo is at the house waiting for you, and he's been there nearly an hour already; he came just as we were starting for our ride, and he's going back to Boston on the eight o'clock train, so I advise you to brace up if you want to see him at all."

"Papa! Do you really mean that papa is here?" exclaimed Chipie, somewhat startled, as Donald came near. "What could have brought him, and for such a flying visit, too!"

Donald laughed.

"Why, it's such an awfully good joke, you know! They've only just heard about Madge's jollification, and the minute uncle Waldo got it into his dazed head that Madge had gone and engaged herself up here in the wilderness, as he thinks it, he jumped on to the train and swooped down on us. The letters that Madge and Mr. Godfrey wrote, two weeks ago, have been spinning about the mountains on a chase after uncle and aunt, and only reached them to-day."

Chipie bit her lips in vexation. Why had Donald come at such a time, with a tale like this! She tried to catch his eye, in order to prevent further annoyance,

but it was useless ; Donald's eyes were intent upon the grasses which he was decapitating, with his riding whip, as he continued :—

" I left uncle Waldo and Mr. Godfrey having a little talk, and Madge was in the garden, in one of her high and mighty moods, waiting for peace to be declared."

Here Donald glanced at Chipie, with a suggestive laugh ; evidently the little event amused him. But the answering glance warned him that his remarks were unappreciated. He became suddenly subdued, and all three were relieved when, as they neared the house, Mr. Margrave, accompanied by Mr. Sturgis and Winny, met them. The former was a courteous, affable appearing man, although upon this occasion he wore an expression far more serious than was usual with him. The news which had come to him a few hours before, had been startling, although the first feeling of depression had begun to wear off, upon meeting and talking with the cause of his concern, and upon observing the quietude which prevailed upon the subject, in his sister's family. Without a doubt he would have returned, greatly calmed, to Mrs. Margrave, who was awaiting his arrival with much anxiety, the fatigue of the journey having kept her from accompanying him, had not further developments come to him ; developments, which in spite of her husband's eulogiums upon Chipie's new friend,

kept Mrs. Margrave awake half the night, and which caused more than one tear to fall upon the faded pictures of her two baby-girls, which seemed to the mother's heart to have been taken hardly longer ago than yesterday. The moment that her father had taken his leave, Chipie shut herself in her room, and gave herself up to thought;—thought made up of variformed emotions. Half an hour had elapsed when, with a little air of triumph, she arose, and walking towards the glass, surveyed herself steadfastly.

"Chipie Margrave," she exclaimed presently, "please give an account of yourself! Who are you, and what is the meaning of the craven spirit which you have been cherishing for weeks and months?"

"Answer:—I am a Bostonian of highly respectable lineage. I precipitated myself into a pool of water, some months ago, and not having deported myself with the easy grace which the occasion demanded, I have been loth to allude to the *faux pas* lest my trusting friends should argue, from the tenacity with which I clung to the mire, that wings were as far from me as Heaven itself."

With a nod, expressive of relief, she seated herself by her writing-desk, and selecting a dainty sheet of note-paper, wrote:—

Dear Mr. Erskine :—

If I have pained you, forgive me ! I am sorry ! May I answer your question, to-morrow morning at five o'clock ? I will meet you on the South Veranda,

Very sincerely yours,

Marghreta Margrave."

CHAPTER XXIII.

COULD Madge have seen Chipie, the following morning, as she stepped upon the piazza at exactly five minutes of five, she would, as a matter of course, have been astonished; but had she known the reason, thereof, she would have been scandalized, as well.

Chipie's dress, was certainly not selected for the sake of enhancing her charms! A pair of thick walking boots signified that she still retained a close connection with terrestrial discomforts. Her dress was caught up sufficiently high to protect it from the wet grass, while a pretty scarlet jacket buttoned close to the throat, and a round felt hat, which would kindly receive the drippings from the branches, completed her toilet.

When ready to leave her room, Chipie looked at herself in the glass, and laughed triumphantly at the sight of her well protected figure and general air of substantial comfort. She tried to fancy Madge consenting to present herself in so practical an attire at a time when one should appear with grace in every line of drapery.

"But it is only what I deserve," she said relentlessly to herself. "This is to be a morning of expiation, and I will meet it boldly! Madge would have me don the daintiest of my morning robes—train and all—for the occasion, and upon my head she would place a woodland mossy hat, quite ignoring the baptism which I'm sure to get before I leave the dewy depths of the forest."

She smiled with her lips, as she crept noiselessly down stairs, but her heart did nothing of the kind. She was beginning to feel nervous, and was half wishing that she had not chosen this mode of answering Mr. Erskine, when a well known step sounded on one of the side paths, and presently the subject of her thoughts stood before her. He opened his watch and held it up; it was just five o'clock.

"I trust that you appreciate my punctuality, Miss Margrave?"

He said it with a grave, half smile, and Chipie thought how differently the ceremonious "Miss Mar-

grave," sounded, from the "Marghreta," of the previous day.

"Yes," she replied, with an attempt to appear wholly at ease; "I'm sure that Grove would never have accomplished so mighty a deed, unaided by an alarm bell!"

The only response was a quiet bow, and silence was maintained until they had passed down the lilac-path and were turning towards the woods, when Mr. Erskine said calmly:

"I must, of course, follow my guide, being incapable of taking the position myself. I am totally ignorant of your design!"

"Yes," Chipie answered, rather demurely, "you are very pardonable, certainly."

Again they walked on, in silence, the minds of both being equally absorbed in speculation as to the result of the early ramble.

It was occasionally necessary for Mr. Erskine to aid Chipie in detaching the clinging briars, which would, notwithstanding the defiant glances which she sent at them, fasten their obstinate claws in her dress, and once or twice, they even dared to clutch at her hat, so that she was obliged to stand meekly in front of her companion, with upraised face, and submit to his assistance.

She had chosen an overgrown cross-path because

it was the shortest way to her destination, and it finally terminated in the ridge-road, which Mr. Erskine had said was his favorite walk. They kept it, for some minutes, and then turned into a bridle-path : at this point, Chipie increased her pace, for she was beginning to feel, as she had not felt before, the full ridiculousness of the affair, and she was in nervous haste to have it over. A final turn, and they came suddenly out from the tangle of shrubbery, to find themselves standing by the brink of the black pool. In all the weeks that had passed since Chipie had seen it, it had changed almost beyond recognition : an army of cat-tails stood in grand array, keeping guard, while all about, a royal flame of color, waved the gorgeous spikes of cardinal flowers. At any other time, Chipie would have gone into ecstasies over the wealth of her favorites, but now she stood still,—unheedful. Her companion did the same, and it was some minutes before Chipie looked up, to discover the effect of her proceeding. Mr. Erskine's face was unmoved ; not a line or a curve gave evidence that a clew to Chipie's manœuvre had been caught.

“ Have you ever seen this romantic lakelet, before, Mr. Erskine ? ” Chipie at length ventured.

“ Yes, a great many times,” came the calm reply.

“ It is an ugly, treacherous place, is it not ? ” after another pause.

"With all this beauty?" waving his hand toward the blossoms. "Pardon me, I do not think so!"

"But it is such a froggy place," continued Chipie, wondering impatiently why her companion could not guess the truth, and, comprehending her trying position, with his usual delicate intuition, spare her the humiliation of explanation. Her exaggerated view of the accident was becoming more absurd every minute now, but that did n't, by any means, help to make her confession any easier; so while she was summoning fresh courage to her aid, she said humbly, "The water is so black and dreadful, how can you held thinking it ugly?"

"Because I've never seen anything about it, with the exception of a few harmless frogs, that I have not loved; *loved*," he added earnestly, "even to these glorious red blossoms, which, by the way, I've been twice on the point of gathering, within the last five days, for yourself."

"But, Mr. Erskine, you—" Chipie stopped abruptly, not knowing how to break the truth gently enough.

"Yes, Miss Margrave?" came the quiet interrogation.

"You forget the time—the time you found somebody in it—gathering water-lilies, you know?"

"On the contrary, nothing is fresher in my mind.

But did I find her gathering lilies? I thought she was gathering a convention of water-sprites preparatory to some mysterious thaumaturgics."

"*Mr. Erskine!*"

In a twinkling, the truth came to Chipie. She moved a step nearer, that she might see the averted face; it was turned persistently towards three careering crows in the distance: at Chipie's movement, it came back to her, flashing with laughter. But at the sight of the pathetic upraised face, the merriment vanished: a light dawned upon him; he understood now what the haughty reserve of those first days signified—the keen mortification which had prompted it, and also the feeling which had influenced her in this last act.

After a brief silence, he said, earnestly;

"Miss Chipie, do you think that my first meeting with one whom I have come to love with all the strength of my nature, can ever be erased from my memory?" Chipie gasped to herself. "My child," advancing towards her with extended arms, "can you not return my love?—Marghreta, tell me!"

If only Chipie's reply, and the talk which followed, could be chronicled! But the birds, which, one by one had been leaving their little beds and tuning their tiny throats for their matin chorus, burst forth with such a flood of melody and praise, that nothing could be distinguished above it, and by the radiant faces,

alone, could one guess at the purport of the hour's commune.

After leaving the woods, as they were nearing the house, Chipie exclaimed, curiously;

"But you did n't tell me where, or how, you identified that poor little wretch of the bog!"

"When? The second time that I met you as Miss Margrave. How? Simply by catching sight of a little by-play, between your cousin Grove and yourself, which, pardon me, I suppose I ought not to have seen; but I did, and immediately found an interpretation in the frowns and expostulatory glances which answered the incorrigible cousin Grove's innuendoes regarding Miss Chipie's fondness for pond-lilies."

"And how could you assure me, after that, that you believed one's manner of accepting an absurd position, indicatory of one's character?"

"Because you, yourself, helped to confirm my opinion! You plainly evinced, upon the occasion in question, your inability to feign; also, an earnestness of purpose, and a truthfulness, which were more than refreshing: then, too, a piquant originality was displayed, which won my admiration! In short, you were *yourself!*"

By this time, Chipie was laughing as gaily as was her companion.

"But just one word for myself," continued Mr. Ers-

kine, "as confessions seem to be the order of the day. In return for your frank avowal of the stratagem resorted to, to prevent your friends from visiting the despised meré, let me say that in every instance you have been aided and abetted by your truly humble servant. Are we wholly at peace now?"

He took the hand held towards him, and kept it a moment without speaking; then placing in it the cardinals which he had gathered, he said tenderly:

"Marghreta—my Marghreta,—I bid you a very early good morning, and at a more civilized hour I may come again, may I not?"

He lifted his hat, and with an earnest "God bless you, child," left her.

As Chipie turned to go in, she hoped that she might reach her room, unnoticed, but as she turned the corner of the house, to her dismay she came face to face with Mr. Sturgis, who, with arms behind him, was walking leisurely up and down the piazza, enjoying his cigar and the morning freshness. At the sight of Chipie, he threw the cigar away, and striking an attitude of astonishment, exclaimed:

"Well, well! And do you mean to tell me that the beauty of the morning tempted you out, all by yourself? Why, in the name of aurora, didn't you invite your old uncle to accompany you? It isn't safe to start off alone, in this fashion, my dear; no, no, it is n't safe!"

"Uncle Malcolm, you really must n't detain me a minute. Only look at my poor wet boots! I tremble for the consequences!"

She would have rushed past, but she was intercepted.

"Tut! tut! Not a bit of it, my dear,—not a bit of it! I must find out what it is that is dazzling my poor vision so ruthlessly. Is it the posies, the eyes or the cheeks? I declare 'tis a wonderful bit of color, whatever it is; 'tis a study for an artist. Just stand here, my dear, while I tell Kate to bring her brush and palette. She is up!"

"Uncle Malcolm, I'm ashamed of you; you are exhibiting an unpardonable curiosity! Please make me an apology and let me pass, or better still, let me pass, and I will take the apology for granted."

"Ah, well, if she won't confide her little secrets to her old uncle, now, he will await her pleasure in the library. By—by!"

Chipie sped in quickly: as she passed the music-room, the sound of the guitar struck her ear, and Grove's clear tenor rang out:—

"The old, old story was told again,
At five o'clock in the morning;
The old, old story was told again,
At five o'clock in the morning."

What did it mean? Had they all been peeping over

her shoulder, the previous evening while she was penning her note, or had they possessed themselves of invisible cloaks, and followed in a procession, after her, this morning !

She hurried on, momentarily expecting to be captured by some hidden watcher ; but no one molested her. It was not until the breakfast bell rang, that a low knock came upon her door, and Kate called softly ;

“ Am I barred out, Chipie ? ”

The door was thrown open, and the two girls confronted each other, Kate triumphant, and Chipie abashed.

“ Oh, that Marplot Cupid,—that *Marplot Cupid!* ” exclaimed Kate, speaking first.

“ Kate, what is the meaning of it—why were you all up at such an unheard of hour ? ”

“ Following your illustrious example, to be sure ; could we do better ? ”

“ But I do n’t understand it ! Who was up first ? ”

“ I fancy that you were, dear,” laughed Kate, gaily. “ Papa and Grove were awakened at an unusual hour, by suspicious sounds in the hall ; they dressed as quickly as they could, and seizing their revolvers, started in hot pursuit, reaching the south door just in time to see two figures disappearing down the lilac-path. I heard the commotion and stepped into your room to get a sly peep from your end window, and lo ! where were you ? ”

"Oh, Kate, Kate," cried Chipie, "I didn't mean to do it, really; but as Madge and Walter said, 'I could n't help it!' Will you forgive me, Kate?—For truly I did n't intend to end in this every-day fashion, when we last talked about our grand ambitions! Say that I'm not fickle, Kate! Say that you still respect me!"

In answer, Kate caught her cousin, and spun about in a wild waltz, and, when quite out of breath, dragged her to a seat.

"My blessed girl, it is the most delightful thing that has happened this summer. I can't tell you how glad I am, although I've known all about it, for weeks, so it is n't a bit of a surprise!"

At breakfast, Mr. Sturgis seized an opportunity to lean forward, and say in a remorseful undertone:

"Do n't tell anyone, niece, but I barely escaped putting a bullet through Mr. Erskine's fine head, this morning! Saw him rushing along the lilac-path at a most suspicious gait, and only recognized him at the last moment. 'T would have been an unlucky shot, would n't it, my dear?"

"It would n't have been nice, for you, uncle Malcolm," Chipie replied amiably.

When Madge bestowed her congratulations, later in the day, she smiled with inward satisfaction, as she gracefully performed her part, and hoped that Chipie

would not feel that coals of fire were being heaped upon her head, upon recalling her own manner of receiving a similar *denouement*, a few weeks previously. She felt, however, that it was but just that a slight counter-stroke should be given upon the occasion, so she concluded her prettily worded felicitations, by saying, with a lenient smile :

“ And I trust that you will find immeasurable enjoyment, Chipie dear, in your new life, which I am confident that you will fill, charmingly. Certainly I can’t object to the engagement because of Mr. Erskine’s extreme youth. *Kiss me, dear!* ”

Chipie was amused, but she would have been far more so, could she have overheard the patronizing manner with which the younger lovers treated her engagement the same afternoon, on the archery field. Walter was tightening his bow, when upon glancing at Madge, he observed a thoughtful expression resting upon her brow.

“ Madge darling, what is the matter? ” he exclaimed with becoming anxiety, as he picked up an arrow which had fallen from her quiver.

“ Do n’t be troubled, Walter, ” Madge answered reassuringly. “ I was only thinking how strange it is, that Chipie should care to marry an old gentleman like Mr. Erskine. Why I should be simply miserable if you were forty years old, dear! ”

"Yes,—but then Mr. Erskine doesn't show his age as a good many men do; he is dignified, of course, but some people like that, you know!"

"Yes, I think Chipie does. But when there is such a difference in age, I should think that it would destroy all the romance and everything, should n't you?"

"Why yes, certainly it must," was the confident response, "and yet, they seem awfully happy somehow!"

"Isn't it strange?" said Madge, musingly, "and yet, as you say, my poor Chipie seems perfectly happy and contented."

"Well, Mr. Erskine is an unusual character, you know, and I don't believe that Miss Chipie would care a straw for a young fellow! She dubs us all bores."

The sage colloquy was broken in upon by Donald, who bounded before the target, performing a series of gymnastic feats.

"What has happened, Donald?" asked Madge, drawing an arrow.

"The great event of the season, to be sure—excuse me, I mean the *second* great event! It's one of the jolliest things, and do you know Madge, I've already got an invitation to make them—Mr. Erskine, I mean—a visit! He's got one of the grandest old places down there in Baltimore, and there's no end of fun for the future: Hurrah! You know that Mr. Erskine and I

were old friends before any of you ever saw him? I'm going to reward Chip. for making him my cousin, by giving her such a wedding present as she never dreamed of—that is, from a *minor!*"

"Oh, what is it?" asked Winny who had come up with Donald.

"Have n't thought it up, yet," said Donald. "Must sleep on it first; there's plenty of time. But Win. I know what you could give her that would please her more than anything else you could think of," and he drew Winny excitedly aside. "You just make a collection of all your poems—that is, all you consider up to the mark—beginning with those that you wrote when you were a little tot, and we'll have them *published!* How is that for an idea?"

"Published!" gasped Winny, clasping her hands rapturously. "Oh, Donny, they never could be published, and if they were, nobody would read them!"

"Don't you be so sure of that, you humble little sea-shell! The poems shall be published, and that ends it! If the publishers don't know enough to see what stunning things they are, why, then we'll publish them ourselves; nothing easier in the world; I've often heard of it, and then, don't you see, you could have as many as you wanted, to give away, and there's a good deal in that. Now that little piece you read me, the other day, about the Convent Gate, was as

good as anything in the poetry line that I ever read!"

"Oh, Donny, I'm afraid it only sounded nice to you, because I wrote it," said Winny, still bewildered by the thrilling possibility."

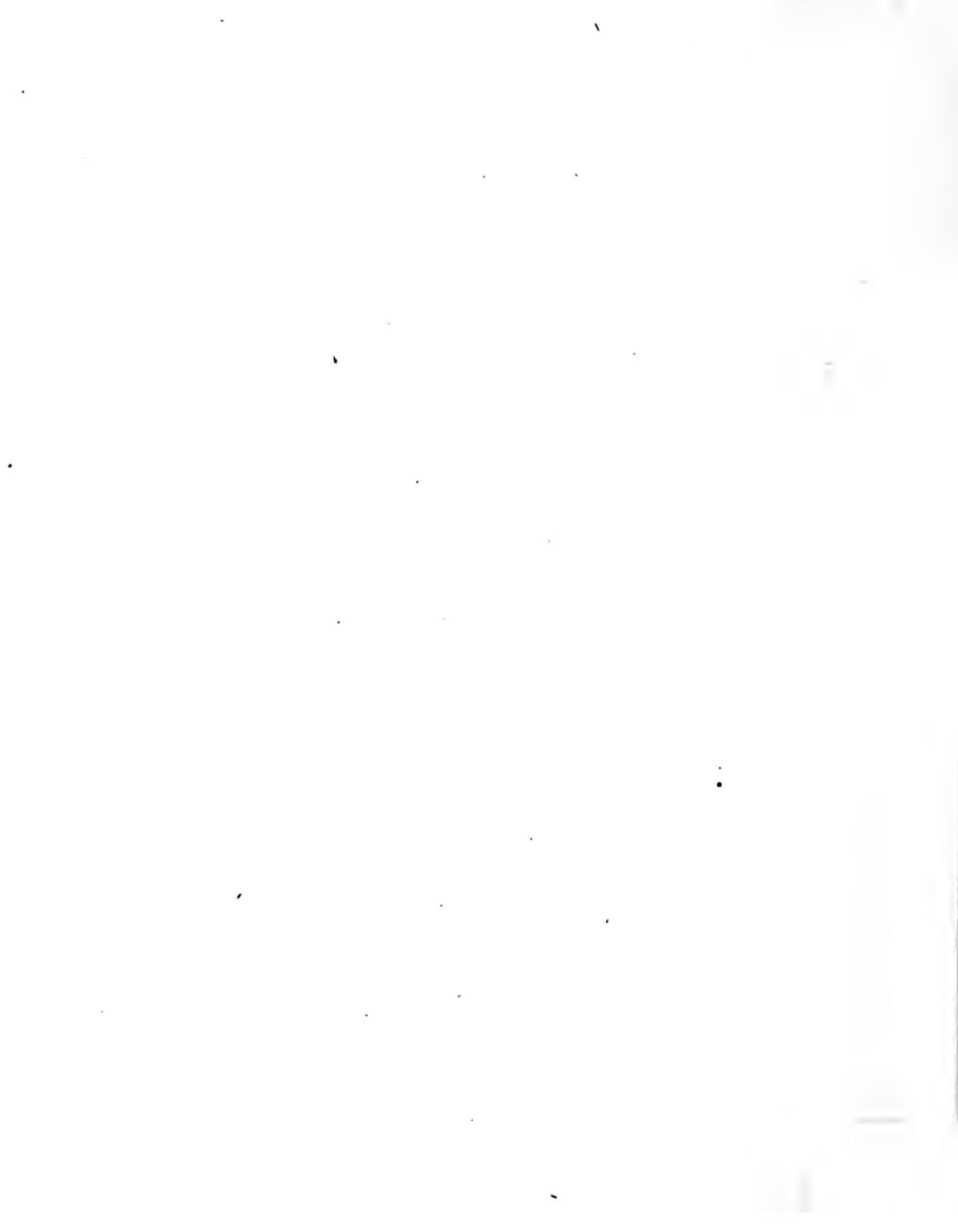
"That is a fine mistake, Miss Win. If you please, I'm not the only one who can distinguish merit; only the other day, when doctor Francke was here, mamma gave him that piece to read, and *my!* if his nose didn't get red before he was half through, I don't know what red is! I tell you, Win. a poem that will turn a man's nose red, is the poem to succeed. But look! There is Mr. Erskine, on the west balcony."

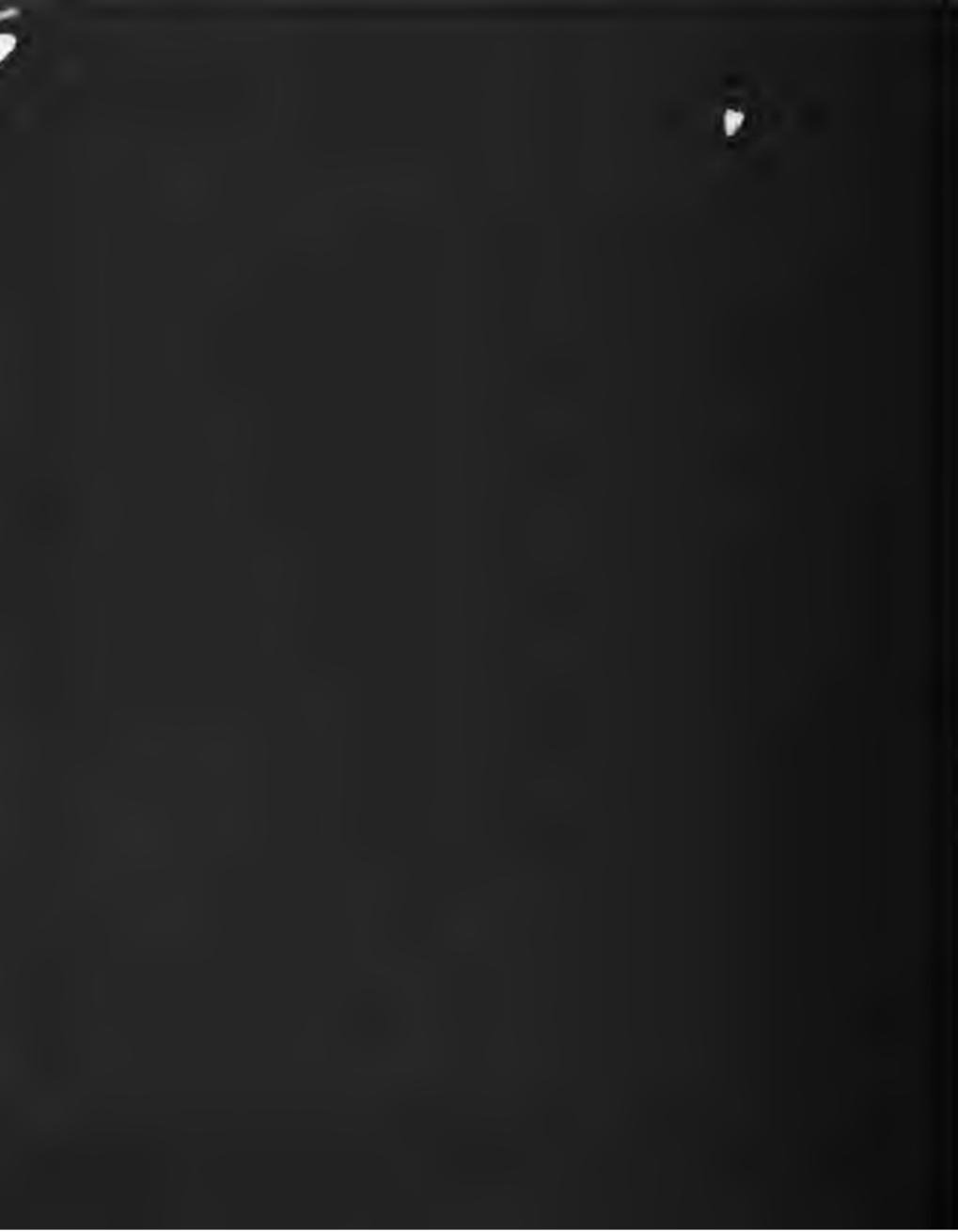
"Yes," responded Winny, shading the sun from her eyes, "and isn't it dreadful that this is the last day? O, Donny, how splendid he is, and there is Chipie on the balcony, too. Oh, mustn't she feel proud of him!"

"And mustn't he feel proud of Chip?" answered Donald, eagerly. I tell you a man has a right to feel proud when he wins a girl like our Kate or Chip! No wonder he looks at her this way every time he speaks!" and Donald glowered upon Winny a gaze which he meant to express what he had so often remarked in Mr. Erskine's eyes of late; but Winny saw only two bright, fierce boy eyes, glaring as if they would annihilate her.

"O, Donny," she cried with a merry peal, "you can't look it right for years and years. I am *so glad!*"

T H E E N D.





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